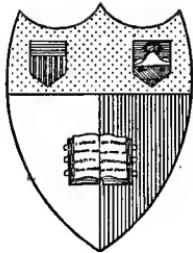


# BRUGES

## A RECORD AND AN IMPRESSION

by  
MARY STRATTON  
Illustrated by  
CHARLES WADE





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# BRUGES





Frontispiece



The Belfry from Rue aux Laines.

# BRUGES

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by MARY STRATTON  
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## PREFACE

MR. WADE's drawings and my own enjoyment of the work are my excuses for yielding to the temptation to write this book.

Within the space allowed, more than a sketch of so profound a subject is not possible. To me Bruges is a personality, and my endeavour has been to outline her history and to indicate her main characteristics. If this book should give pleasure to the reader or be the means of showing Bruges to some who have not yet seen that fair city, it will have attained its object.

It is with pleasure that I acknowledge my indebtedness to M. Louis Beyaert of Bruges for the encouragement he has given me, as well as for his kindness in reading the proof sheets; and to my husband, Arthur Stratton, F.R.I.B.A., for his help in the chapter dealing with the façades and architectural details.

MARY STRATTON.

*July 1914.*

## AFTERWORD

SINCE the above was written the war cloud has burst in Belgium. Recent events have proved the loyalty and courage of the Flemings, so often dwelt upon in the following pages. Of the Belgians it

may with truth be said, that their lion-heartedness is as undeniable to-day as in the time of Pierre de Coninck and Van Artevelde. Faith in God, patriotism, and family devotion have inspired the heroic resistance which, as I write, is focusing the eyes of the civilised world upon Belgium and her beautiful cities.

M. S.

*September 1914.*

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Golf, from a Manuscript executed in Bruges in the 16th Century,  
and now in the British Museum

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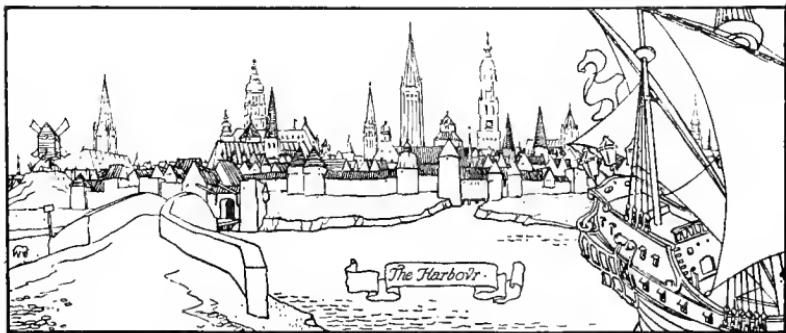
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Bruges from an old Drawing in the British Museum

## CHAPTER I

### THE STORY OF BRUGES & DAMME

**B**RUGES is essentially a mediæval city ; the irregularity of the buildings that line her narrow sinuous streets, the lofty towers that stand out against the sky, and, from whatever quarter seen, group themselves so happily, recall the Middle Ages, the days when Bruges, the capital of West Flanders, was distinguished both as a centre of commerce and as a meeting-place of scholars, poets, artists, and men renowned for their rank and valour. In the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries the city flourished greatly ; the fifteenth century saw her at the height of her fortunes and witnessed the beginning of her fall. Within her walls the re-birth in art, in letters, and in thought was welcomed ; she felt the joy in life

that came with it and took advantage of the wider outlook which was a gift of the Renaissance, although in her architecture she was slow to be influenced by that great movement. Owing to the comparative poverty and unimportance of the city during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, her ancient buildings were spared many of the onslaughts which might otherwise have laid them low and filled their place with classic forms borrowed from other climes ; and though it may be true that Bruges to-day presents but the shadow of the beauty and splendour which distinguished her in the fifteenth century, there remains enough of the past to enable the imagination—aided by records that still exist—to conjure up a picture of the fair city which gladdened the eyes of Philippe de Commines and Erasmus, that gave a haven to Edward IV. and Charles II. of England.

Enough is left to attest to the characteristics of the race to which Bruges owes her origin. A worship of courage, a passion for freedom, a grasping after commercial prosperity, attended by a devotion to home and family hardly surpassed by the *pietas* of the ancient Romans, were the qualities which distinguished the Flemings. By Flemings was Bruges peopled, and—with a few exceptions—ruled, from her foundation in the ninth century until she came under the sway of the Dukes of Burgundy some five centuries later.



View from Pont Flamand, looking towards Pont des Baudets.



In the Rue St. Nicholas

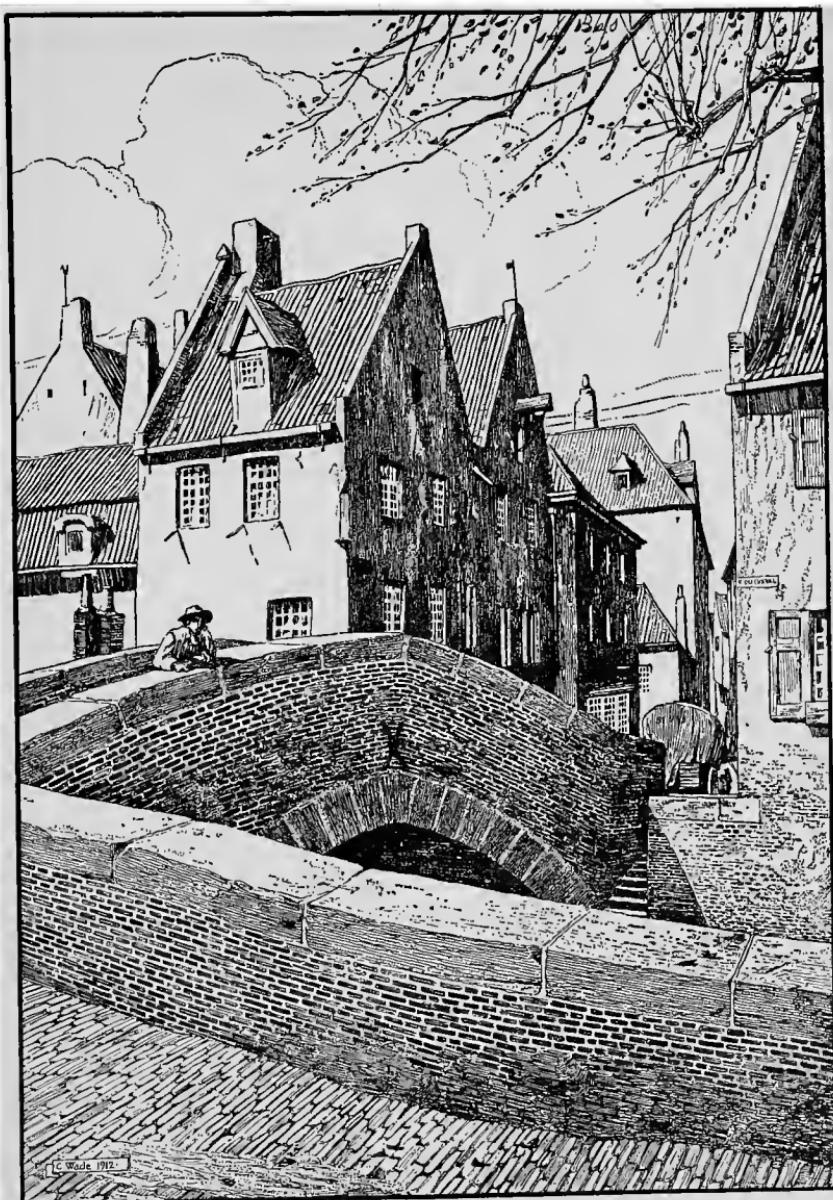
To those who care for the life of a people, for the history of their strivings, their failures, their conquests, and their ideals, Bruges is a precious repertory, for in the Bruges of to-day is enshrined the life-blood of the men who reared the city, who fought for it, who sacrificed their lives in its defence ; and in the Bruges of to-day palpitates the soul of the people. Devotion is still one of their characteristics, and to their religion are due some of the most arresting sights that the city can offer. The art of an earlier age gives a seemly setting to the religious ceremony of to-day as practised in the churches and pre-eminently in the church of Notre Dame. Dominated by a single crucifix, the beauty of which lives in the memory, the nave of this vast church crowded with worshippers is one of the many proofs of the vitality of the Church in Bruges.

For seclusion from the bustle of the world, it would be difficult to find a spot to surpass the Béguinage, with its expanse of smooth green turf, its lofty elms, and its *entourage* of whitewashed houses. Here the beauty of the past greets the spirit without either sadness or sense of loss.

The name of ‘Venice of the North,’ familiar to any tourist in Belgium, was probably more apt—from a physical as well as a mercantile standpoint—centuries ago than it is to-day. Old pictures and old maps show the city intersected by canals in all

directions and surrounded by water ; boats were commonly used as a means of transit, and the walls of many buildings now standing in cobbled streets must at one time have risen from the waters of a canal long since filled up. It is probable also that before the sixteenth century, when Bruges enjoyed direct and navigable communication with the sea—in the days when Damme, the port of Bruges, had a harbour capable of containing a great fleet—the water which flowed through the streets and round about her walls had something of the colour and quality to which Venice owes much of her wonder.

The generally accepted opinion of the traveller to-day seems to be that Bruges is a place to halt in for two or at the most three days. By dint of a few drives, visits to certain museums and churches, and a glance at the Grand' Place, it is believed that a comprehensive idea of the place has been obtained and many pass on—regretfully or with relief according to temperament—to the next hunting ground, be it England or farther afield in Europe without an idea of the stores of interest and loveliness left behind them untasted. Of course to the architect there are few cities in Europe of equal interest—Bruges being indeed a precious heritage of the Middle Ages—but it is not for the architect only that this book is written, nor is it to him alone that the time-worn city makes a searching appeal. For



The Pont du Cheval

those who care for history, for the achievements of the past, for art, for beauty in any form, fresh aspects of the old city are ever unfolding, while the treasures of her museums and libraries can be familiar to him only who has lived long within her precincts.

In contrast with many a town of Italy, France, and Germany, this city of Northern Europe owes practically nothing to natural beauty and appeals less to the senses than to the imagination. Just as some faces appear beautiful or not according to their background or the light in which they are seen, so Bruges varies in her attractiveness. On a dull, colourless day she disappoints, but with blue sky and sunshine, or in the light of sunset, or in the after-glow, Bruges captures the heart of the lover of beauty.

The substitution of streets for canals, though a gain in convenience, is a loss æsthetically. It is interesting to read the impressions made by this city on two such observers as Wordsworth and Rossetti. To Rossetti, Bruges meant Memlinc and Van Eyck, and his visit was worthy of note because his ears heard the carillon that they had heard.

“John Memmeling and John van Eyck  
Hold state at Bruges. In sore shame  
I scanned the works that keep their name,  
The carillon, which then did strike  
Mine ears, was heard of theirs alike :  
It sets me closer unto them.”

That he makes no remark on any fascination

held for him by the city is perhaps due to the east wind which swept Bruges and the surrounding country during his visit, and to the fact that

“The sunless sky has not once had the sun  
Since the first weak beginning of the day.”

A wintry visit this, with atmosphere unfit for the fiery spirit to whose well-being warmth and radiance were necessary. Wordsworth was more fortunate.

“Bruges I saw attired with golden light  
(Streamed from the west) as with a robe of power.”

And to her architecture he yields generous tribute.

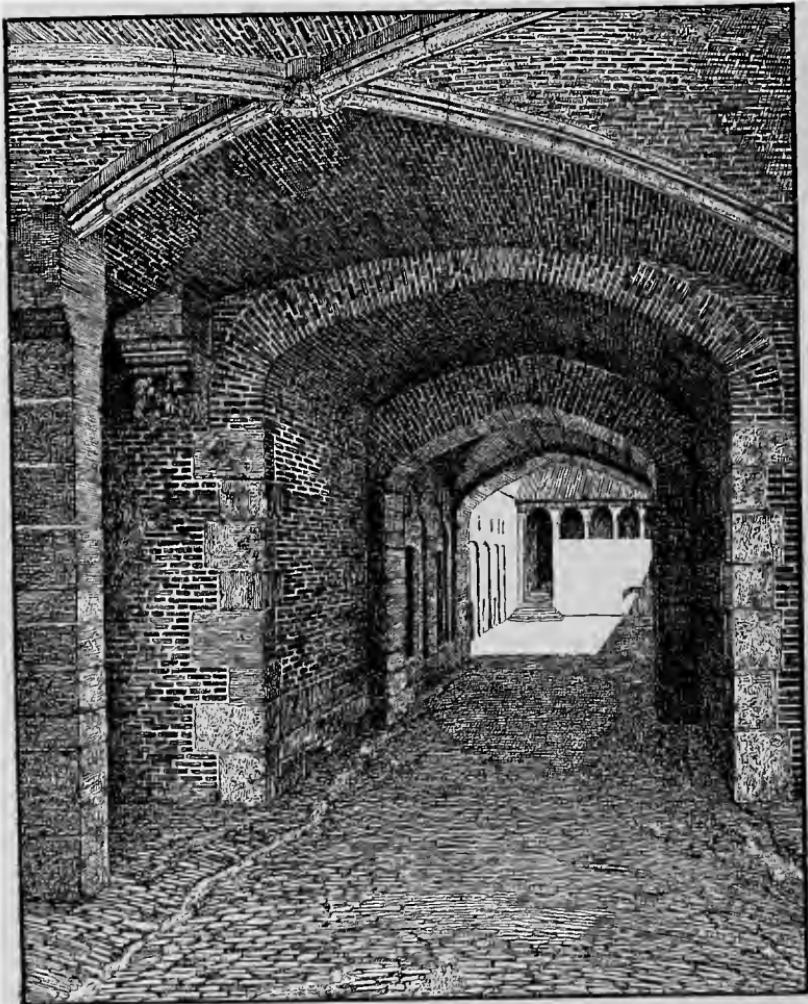
“The Spirit of Antiquity—enshrined  
In sumptuous buildings. . . .”

It would seem that Bruges has as many faces as her onlookers, but there is one sight she offers that few who have seen can forget, the tower of the Belfry at night, standing out tall, clear, grey, from a background of soft darkness, all the defacements that time and attack have wrought upon it hidden. Aloof from the pettiness of the present, alive with the spirit of the past, with the souls of the men who made it, to how many a rebellious heart has not the Belfry suggested rest, to how many a tired spirit has it not given strength, to how many a falterer hope!

The secret of the fascination of Bruges lies in her recall of a bygone day: the secret of her

strength in the faith and courage of her people—her people of the past and of the present. Since the twelfth century the devotion of Brugeans has vested itself in the relic of the *Précieux Sang* brought to the city by Dierck of Alsace on his return from the Second Crusade. More than once lost for a period but always happily recovered, this relic stands to the people for all they hold most precious, and is intimately wrapt up in their lives. See them in the Chapel of the Saint Sang in the dark cold of winter before day has dawned, at five o'clock on a Friday morning ; old women with deep lines on their faces, men to whom life has brought labour and hardness, but as they pass before the *Châsse* tears not of bitterness but of thankfulness pour down their faces. See again on a fair May morning, when the city is green with its many trees in their first freshness and the air sweet with lilac, the procession of the *Précieux Sang*. All Bruges is afoot, and from other countries and from across the sea are gathered the faithful, paying homage and rejoicing in the possession of this relic, which represents all that is fairest and noblest in life, which is indeed the hope that lightens the load of the weary, the light that beckons to the beyond. An unparalleled sight the procession of the *Précieux Sang*, and to those who have witnessed it Bruges will ever have an added beauty, a suggestion of the inner life of her people.

Fierce and rugged though it is, the early history of the citizens of Bruges and of the Counts of Flanders is of vital interest to those who would know the city to-day. It was in the ninth century that Baldwyn of the Iron Hand, a Saxon Fleming, was created Count of Flanders by Charles the Bald, King of the West Franks. Baldwyn had incurred the displeasure of his overlord by seeking in marriage and running away with his daughter Judith, a woman of great beauty and force of character, who had already been married to Ethelwulf, King of Wessex, and thus was stepmother to Alfred the Great. Charles, however, forgave them, and Baldwyn and Judith repaired to Flanders and chose for their home the small island formed by the Reie and the Boterbeke. A fortified camp or castle had stood here from very early days, but it had fallen into decay, and Baldwyn built a new Bourg consisting of a palace for himself, a chapel, various habitations for his dependents, and the Cathedral of St. Donatian, wherein he placed the relics of that Saint. Baldwyn's palace stood on the site now occupied by the Palais de Justice and the Hôtel de Ville, while the Cathedral stood on the north side of the Bourg where are now chestnut trees. A high wall surrounded the island, and the four gateways, each supplied with portcullis and drawbridge, formed the only means of approach. Outside this wall were



One of the Entrances to the Belfry

the dwellings—poor enough—of the various dependents for whom there was no accommodation within. Of Baldwyn's handiwork the only traces remaining must be sought in the crypt of St. Basil.

It was in the year 879 that Baldwyn died, and as early as 912 his son surrounded the Bourg with a moat and outside the moat he erected a wall of stone and rubble. Gradually the city grew and flourished, and through happenings propitious or adverse, the Flemings remained true to their ideal of freedom : and always there was jealousy between the dwellers in the city and the karls or free-men without, whose settlements were in the surrounding country, and who constituted the 'Franc' or 'Liberty' of Bruges. This feud broke out in the twelfth century when Charles the Good was Count of Flanders, and amongst other results in 1126 brought about the murder of that strange nobleman, whose name has come down to posterity in such vari-coloured fame. But whether he were saint or whether he were the instrument of evil, he suffered death by violence as he knelt in prayer in the Cathedral of St. Donatian, and the choice of resting-place for his body caused as fierce warfare as did the actions of his life. Charles is to be remembered not only for his tragic end, but also as a great builder. By him was reared the Loove Palace, occupying the part of the Bourg on which now stands the Palais de Justice and a

fragment of the Palais du Franc, and he was the rebuilder of the church of Notre Dame after its destruction by fire in 1116.

Of paramount importance to the faithful in Bruges was Dierck of Alsace, Count of Flanders at the time of the Second Crusade. He it was who on his return from the Crusade in 1150 brought to Bruges the relic of the Précieux Sang. A Fleming of the Flemings, Dierck's rule saw the triumph of national liberty among the people of Flanders and the repression of the imperialist and centralising policy of France. The strength of the people increased under his son Philip of Alsace, who is memorable as a builder of cities, as well as for his personal culture and broad-minded policy. Both he and his wife, Elizabeth of Vermandois, were patrons of letters and art ; to their court flocked the literary men of Europe, and Bruges was the centre of chivalry and song. Here, too, Thomas à Becket found refuge from the anger of his king, Henry II. of England. In 1190, the year before his death, Philip founded Damme, the port of Bruges, which in the thirteenth and following centuries was a place of importance.

The next Count of note was Baldwin of Constantinople, in whose recorded history legend mingles with fact. In the early days of his rule he did much for Flanders ; interested in learning, he gathered scholars around him, and to him Bruges owes the

right of holding an annual fair in May—in those days a material aid to the prosperity of a town. In 1199 a gorgeous assembly was gathered together in the church of St. Donatian to witness Baldwyn taking the cross. He set out for the East in 1203, and the following year was made Emperor of new Rome. Within a year he fell, wounded while attempting to relieve the siege of Adrianople. History says he died here: legend tells marvellously of his escape. Whichever be true, it is certain that twenty years after his reported death an old man discovered by woodcutters in a forest of Flanders was believed by the Flemings to be their lost Count, and was restored to his former position. His prosperity was short-lived and his end horrible. Jeanne, the elder daughter of Baldwyn, who had ruled Flanders since his disappearance in 1205, had her supposed father hanged under brutal circumstances. Yet this same Jeanne, whose rule continued until her death in 1244, was famous for her good works, her name having come down as the founder of many an institution for the sick and poor. To her the Béguinage of Bruges owes its origin. It was due to a quarrel between Jeanne's husband, Fernand of Portugal, and Philip Augustus that Damme was wrecked by the French, a fate shared by several smaller Flemish towns. On her death in 1244 her sister Margaret succeeded and ruled until 1280. In the days of Jeanne and



The Quai de la Poterie looking towards the Belfry

Margaret the strength of Bruges as a mercantile centre was at its height, while for scholarship, wit, poetry, and brilliance, she was distinguished among European cities. Her architecture, the gaiety of life within her walls, the fierce courage called forth by the dangers of the time, and the pageantry that associated itself with the motive powers of the Middle Ages—religion and chivalry—rendered her a city full of life and colour and beauty, for which the grimness of those days made an effective background.



View from the Quai Vert, showing the Palais du Franc

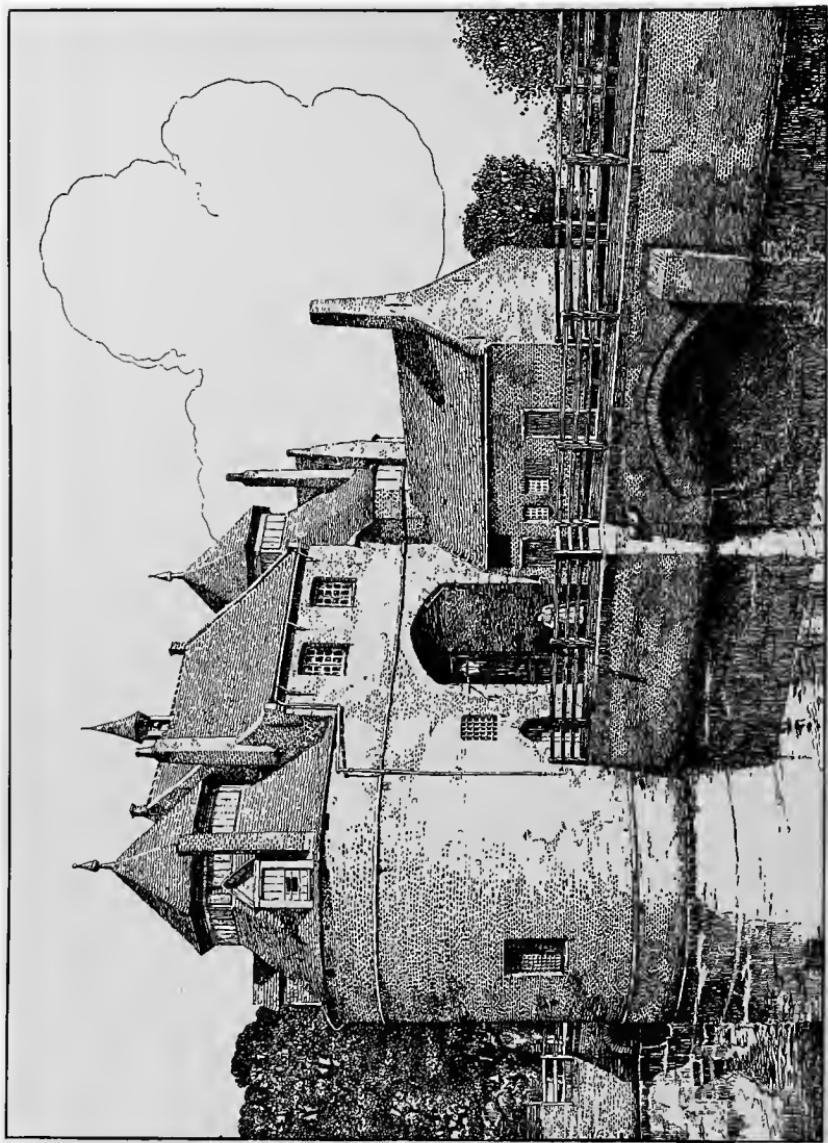
Margaret's second husband was Lord of Dampierre, and their son William of Dampierre became Count on his mother's death, the succession thus departing once more from the Flemish line. Chiefly memorable for his misfortunes he was succeeded in 1283 by Guy de Dampierre, during whose rule of twenty-two years happened some of the most stirring incidents in the history of the city. His friendship with Edward I. of England in no way protected him from Philip IV. of France (Philip le Bel), and the people of Bruges were

treated like slaves by the French monarch, until the fortunes were reversed by the ingenuity and ruthless patriotism of De Coninck and Breidel, whose statues now stand in the Grand' Place. Under the leadership of these men the massacre remembered as the "Matines Brugeoises" was perpetrated in May 1302. Two months later the victory gained by the Communes at the Battle of Courtrai, generally known as the Battle of the Golden Spurs, won for Bruges a democratic form of government. In 1304, after the expulsion of the French, a new charter was granted to the city which strengthened all her old liberties, and notwithstanding the civil wars and misfortunes of Guy's reign Bruges prospered materially and grew in comeliness.

Guy died in 1304, and was succeeded by his son Robert, whose rule as far as Bruges is concerned is chiefly marked by the doings and intrigues of his son Louis of Nevers with the communes of Flanders. Both father and son died in 1322 and Robert's grandson, Louis of Nevers, became Count. It was under the rule of this prince that Flanders was convulsed by the contest in which Jacques van Artevelde took so distinguished a part. Louis spent but little time in Flanders; Nevers, where he held his court, being more to his taste. He was brilliantly clever, and "with consummate skill played Ghent against Bruges and Bruges against Ghent, and Edward

of England against Charles of France.”<sup>1</sup> As a result of this byplay, in which was concerned the commercial prosperity of both England and Flanders, Bruges benefited and was “permitted to deepen and widen her moats, to reconstruct her ramparts, and by a charter dated April 14, 1337, all her ancient rights and liberties were re-established and confirmed.” The hundred years during which the Dukes of Burgundy were Counts of Flanders (1384–1476) were as eventful to Bruges as any in her history. The ambitions of the Burgundians struck the death-blow to the freedom and power of the Communes of Flanders, and largely owing to their policy was the economic decline of Flanders in the fifteenth century. Nevertheless, Bruges increased in prosperity under Philip the Bold (1384–1404) and under his son John the Fearless (1404–1419). In the long reign of Philip the Good (1419–1467) the trade of the city suffered severely owing to his attitude towards England, but it was during the reign of this prince and of his son Charles the Bold (1467–1477) that Bruges enjoyed her greatest splendour. It was indeed her golden age. Lavish patrons of the arts, eager appreciators of the Renaissance, both these princes held their courts within her walls, in the Princenhof, the palace built

<sup>1</sup> *The Story of Bruges.* By Ernest Gilliat-Smith (Mediæval Towns Series), 1909.



The Porte d'Ostende

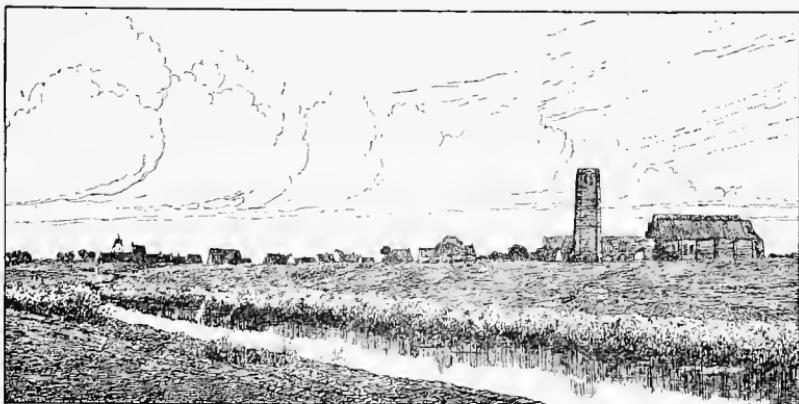
by Philip the Good. At their court—the most sumptuous in Europe—were gathered scholars, poets, artists, and the pageantry of the time has probably never been surpassed. Jean Van Eyck was a member of Duke Philip's household. For once colour and song held sway, and Bruges in the fifteenth century was gay and lovely as any dream city. Abounding in palaces—for she was the headquarters of merchant princes throughout Europe—her canals gay with craft, the Minnewater a dazzling harbour, Bruges was full of life and “one of the three most beautiful cities in Europe.” In 1468 was celebrated at Damme the marriage of Charles the Bold with Margaret of York, sister of Edward IV., and in 1470 Edward, during political troubles at home, spent some time in Bruges, the guest of Louis of Bruges, Lord of Gruuthuuse, one of the most notable personalities of his day. Part of his beautiful house still stands beside the church of Notre Dame. A lover of art, a collector of beautiful objects, and a patron of Colard Mansion—the great printer—his library was one of the finest even in that age rich in libraries and ranks hardly second to that of his sovereign, Philip the Good. It is especially interesting to the lover of Bruges because nearly all the manuscripts were the work of Flemish artists at Bruges or Ghent.<sup>1</sup> Louis of Gruuthuuse

<sup>1</sup> W. Blades, *Biography and Typography of William Caxton.*

attained to the highest honours his country had to give, amongst them being the order of the Golden Fleece, an order of knighthood instituted in 1429 by Philip the Good. For his hospitality and help Edward IV. conferred on him the title of Earl of Winchester. A notable figure at that time was William Caxton, who lived in the city for about thirty years, respected as an English merchant, and for some time holding the office of 'Governor of the English Nation.'<sup>1</sup> In Bruges it was that he acquired the art of printing, introduced into that city by Jean Britto in 1446, and here about the year 1474 Caxton printed his first book *The Recuyell of the Histories of Troye*, a translation of the *Recueil des histoires de Troie*, which he had effected at the bidding of Margaret of York, Duchess of Burgundy. The Dukes of Burgundy were all of them tireless patrons of literature and keen collectors of MSS. and books, and Bruges was the seat of this interest.

When Charles died he was succeeded by his daughter Mary, and her husband Maximilian completed the decline in the fortunes of Bruges which had been begun by the check to her trade given by Philip the Good and by the silting of the Swyn. His reign is a series of misunderstandings with the people of Bruges not unmixed with treachery on his

<sup>1</sup> In 1446 Philip the Good gave great privileges to the Merchant Adventurers under the name of the English Nation.



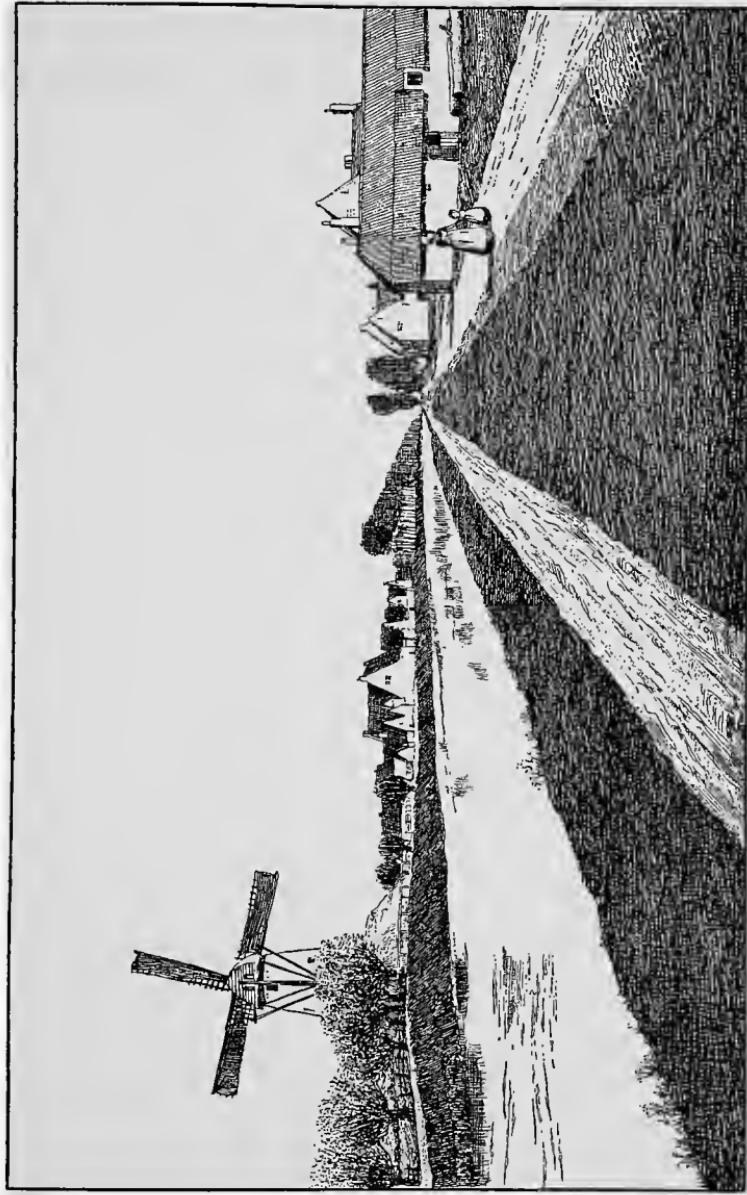
A General View of Damme

part. In 1494 he rendered the province of Flanders with the whole of the Netherlands to his son Philip the Fair, at whose death in 1506 Flanders fell to Charles V., who incorporated the province with Spain. In 1555 it was ruled by Philip II. From this date onwards Flanders engaged in struggles against her foreign rulers, suffered much in the name of religion and changed hands many times, being successively the property of Spain, Austria, the French Republic and Holland, until in 1830 she became part of the kingdom of Belgium. In the many conflicts between the free cities of Flanders and her Counts, the cities were handicapped by their distrust and jealousy of one another. Bruges, Ghent and Ypres were rarely on terms that they could fight a common enemy, and playing one city against

another was a game pleasing and appropriate to the taste and subtlety of not a few of the Counts of Flanders.

A history of Bruges, however unpretentious, must tell something of Damme, and no one who comes to Bruges should fail to visit that charmingly situated little town, some three miles away, once the port of Bruges and a stronghold of Flanders.

Stormy has been its history and shortlived its prosperity. There is little now to suggest the magnificence which called forth the eulogy of Guillaume le Breton ; little to recall the misery and ruin caused by le Breton's noble patron, Philip Augustus. Damme owes its origin to one of Flanders' ablest Counts, Philip of Alsace (1168–1191), and as the port of Bruges it figures prominently in the fortunes of that city during the twelfth and three succeeding centuries. When Bruges was at the height of her prosperity the population of Damme numbered somewhere about sixty thousand. The harbour, which was reached by the Swyn and usually filled with foreign ships carrying rich merchandise, was large enough to contain the French fleet in 1214, the mighty army brought by Philip Augustus for the conquest of the Netherlands. It is said that when Philip left, “tottering walls and smouldering embers were all that remained.” Fire had destroyed the town and blackened the country between it and

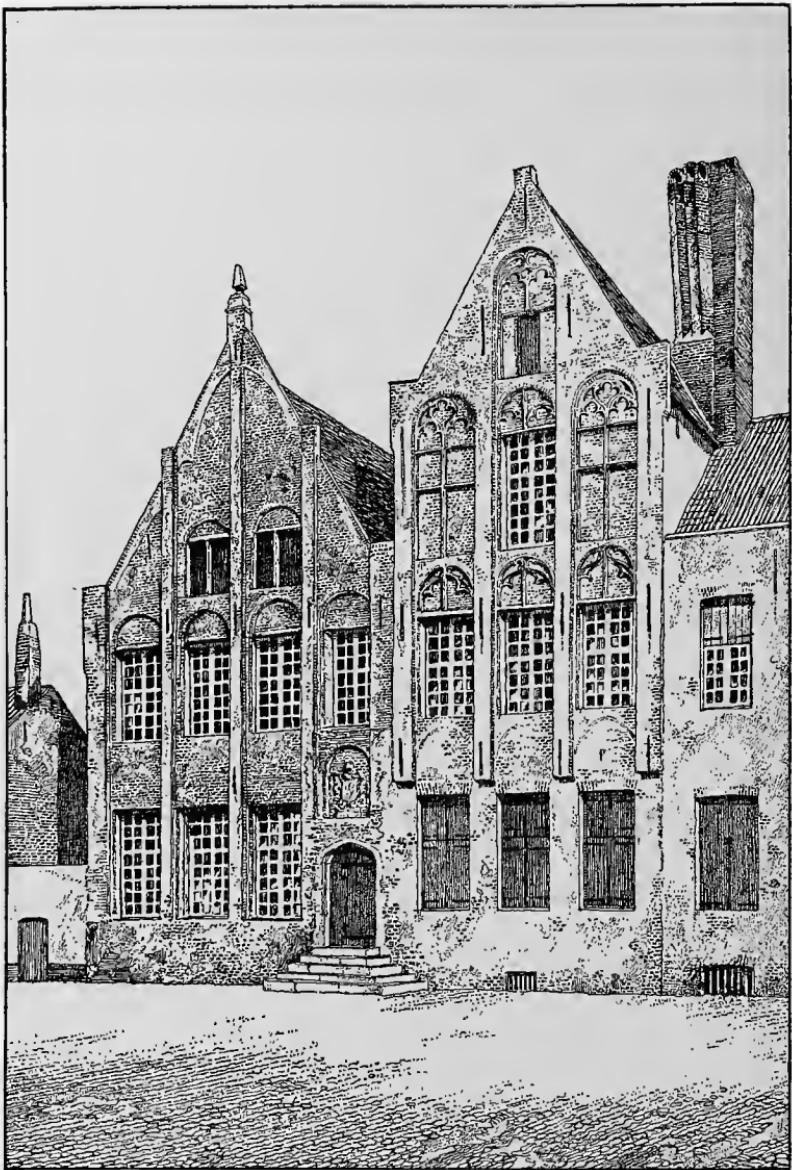


Damme as approached from the Canal



View from a Farmyard beside the Canal at Damme

Bruges. Very soon, however, Damme was rebuilt, but even of the second town not much is to be seen to-day except the Convent and Hospital of St. Jean, founded in 1249 by Margaret of Constantinople. Both Margaret and her sister Jeanne had the interests of the town at heart and granted it many privileges. The church of Notre Dame, which stands out tall and grey from the emerald plain and commands the eye from whichever side Damme is approached, was begun in 1180, and though never finished, has undergone alterations at several periods. It stands at the end of the little town farthest from the canal, and with its surrounding of lovely green recalls many another old church left stranded in a district from which the business of life has drifted. The Town Hall, or Les Halles, was originally built in 1242 ; but having fallen into a ruinous state it was decided in 1463 to rebuild. Master-masons of Bruges, Ghent and other towns were asked to compete, and its erection was carried on from 1464 to 1468. But it was in the fourteenth century that the town reached the high-water mark of its prosperity ; the fifteenth saw its decadence. As early as 1410 navigation of the Swyn as far as Sluys had become difficult, and by the end of the century it was impossible for a vessel of any considerable size to reach Damme. That and the policy of Philip the Good ruined the fortunes of the port of Bruges.



Old Brick Houses at Damme

In the open space in front of the Halles is a statue erected to Jacques Van Maerlant. Foremost amongst Flemish poets, he belonged to the thirteenth century, a time rich in literature in Flanders before the Counts of Flanders had withdrawn their patronage in favour of French literature.

Damme has now hardly a thousand inhabitants. It is small and compact, filled with memories of the past, yet without the sense of desolation obvious in many another town bereft of its sources of prosperity, and not at all suggestive of wars or massacres. Situated on the Sluys canal in the midst of level, fertile country, with its one street, its town hall, interesting old brick houses and its noble church, it has a poetry all its own and gives the impression of having been peacefully left outside the stress and prosperity of progress and expansion. This is perhaps to be accounted for by the fact that natural causes brought the final downfall of the town as a port. Having survived the horrors of war and fire, Damme was deprived of its *raison d'être* by the drying up of the Swyn.

## CHAPTER II

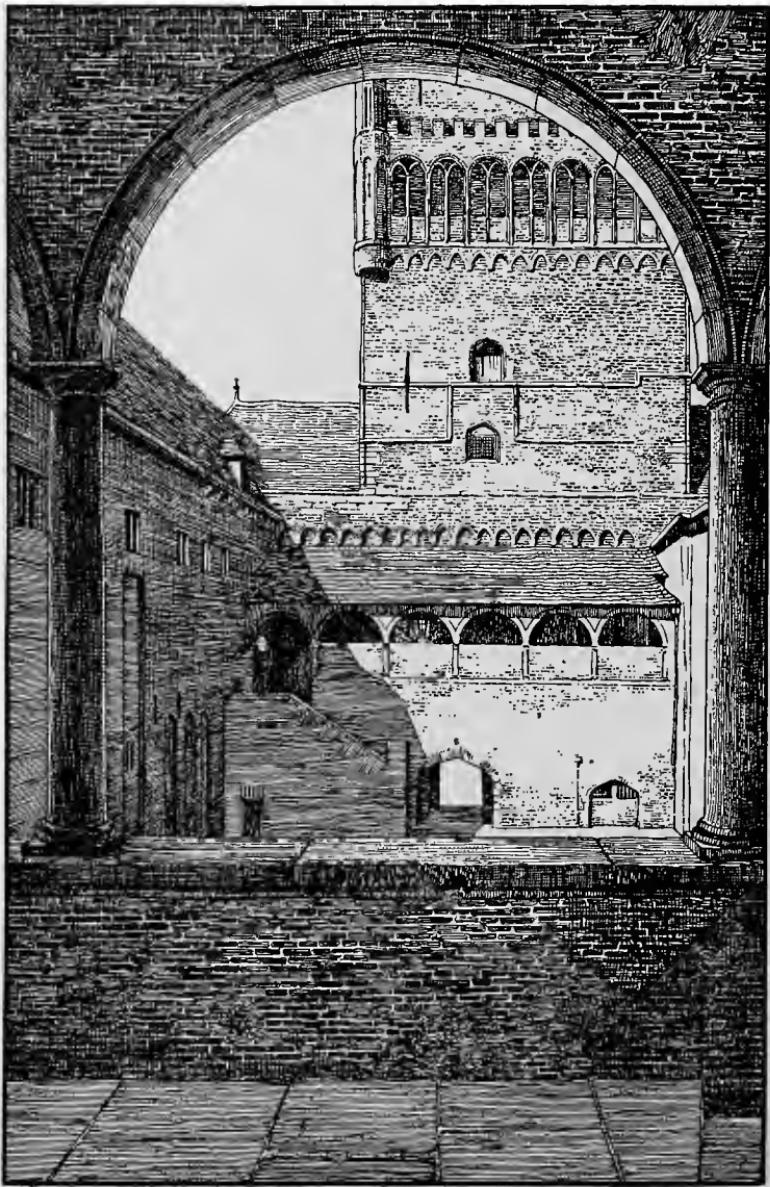
### THE BELFRY, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, AND MARKETS

NEVER perhaps are the changed conditions of a city felt more poignantly than in view of its public buildings. The noble groups of brick or stone, the varied examples of craftsmanship met the needs of a people, and in them that people's love for its city found expression. Nowhere does this truth come home to one more than among the irregular streets and quiet waterways of Bruges, for hundreds of years one of the great communes of Flanders. In mediæval times the spirit of communism—the dominating feature of the free city—was enshrined in the towers of marvellous height and workmanship reared by her citizens. But these towers were not only symbols of liberty : their guardianship of the security of the city was a practical one. From the height of the tower the country for miles around could be scanned and the neighbourhood of foes discerned.

About the year 1040 the first belfry of Bruges was built, no doubt of wood, as were most of the earlier buildings here, according to all accounts. In 1280 this was burnt by an infuriated mob and

with it were destroyed the charters and documents relating to the freedom of the city and the rights of the citizens. It is said that Guy de Dampierre, Count of Flanders (1283-1305), took advantage of this loss to rule the Bruegans as he willed. In 1291, however, the foundations of the existing Belfry were laid, fresh charters were granted by the Count, and the burghers were again in possession of their rights.

Few buildings have had a more adventurous career than this Belfry, and as it stands to-day it shows the scars that have come by rough handling. It is of many stages and various dates. The wings of the façade—formerly the Halles—were added in 1364, and between the years 1483 and 1487 the square tower, then at a height of two storeys, was carried higher by the addition of an octagonal lantern with flanking turrets crowning the lower stage. A year later a flèche some 45 feet high of graceful outline was erected, with a statue of St. Michael at the summit. This flèche was struck by lightning and destroyed in 1493, but there was no delay in reconstructing it on an even more sumptuous scale, and in 1502 it was replaced and surmounted by a metal vane in the form of the Lion of Flanders. In 1741 the flèche was again destroyed by fire, and when restorations were undertaken once more, it was decided to abandon so vulnerable a feature, and from that time no attempt has been made to reinstate it.

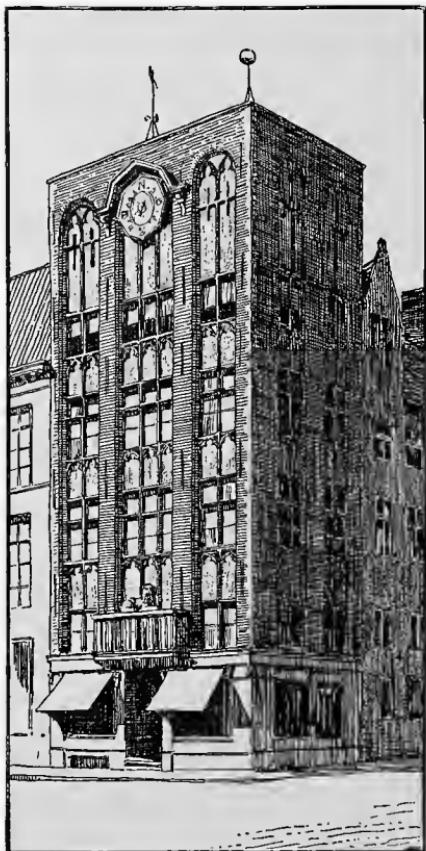


The Belfry from the Gallery in the Courtyard

The parapet now extant was added as a finish to the lantern in 1822, and the eight angle pinnacles which rise above the lantern and form a poor substitute for the soaring flèche also date from this time. The principal stage, whence is obtained a view of the country for miles around—a great attraction to visitors—is reached by a circular staircase trying to head and feet alike.

So prominently does the Belfry figure in Bruges, whether viewed from the historical, the architectural or the psychological standpoint, that some knowledge of its internal arrangements is of interest. The large central entrance, which was remodelled in 1525, gives access to the Halles, a building begun in 1364, enclosing an open oblong court part of which is of earlier date than the tower, but the side of the quadrangle parallel to the main façade dates from the sixteenth century. At the far end of the courtyard is a flight of stone steps leading to a gallery from which a fine view of the Belfry is obtained. The east and south sides of the building are appropriated to a meat market, while the greater part of the ground floor is now the Musée Archéologique, rich in relics of antiquity and works of art pertaining to Bruges and the neighbourhood.

For some the main interest of the Belfry centres in its bells. The great bell weighing 12,295 lb. was cast for the Church of Notre Dame in 1680 and



The Hôtel Bouchoute in the  
Grand' Place

christened Mary ; it was not placed in the Belfry until 1802, and the first time it was rung there was to celebrate the treaty of peace between England and France. The chimes heard to-day have forty-nine bells, most of them cast in 1743, but from the sixteenth century the Belfry has been famed for its carillon. In the days when the citizens of Bruges numbered fifty thousand, a bell was rung daily at the working hours of morning, noon, and evening, when the traffic of weavers was so dense

and so continuous as to prevent the customary raising of the bridges to allow of the passage of craft on the canals.

For centuries a statue of the Virgin has stood in a niche over the entrance to the Belfry ; it was torn

away by the French Revolutionists, but was put back again, and after it had perished from exposure a new one was placed in position with ceremony in September 1911. Beneath the statue is the small balcony with iron railings, whence until 1769 were proclaimed laws, treaties of peace, and enactments dealing with the interests of the Commune : since then such proclamations have been made from the Hôtel de Ville.

The large open space facing the Belfry and known as the Grand' Place was the scene of happenings the most notable in the history of Bruges as well as being the playground of her nobles and burghers in the days of her greatest prosperity. Though a comparison with old pictures shows that much of the mediæval aspect has been lost and that the present buildings fall lamentably short of those they have replaced, the spirit of romance lingers in the Place and to the lover of the Middle Ages bids a welcome.

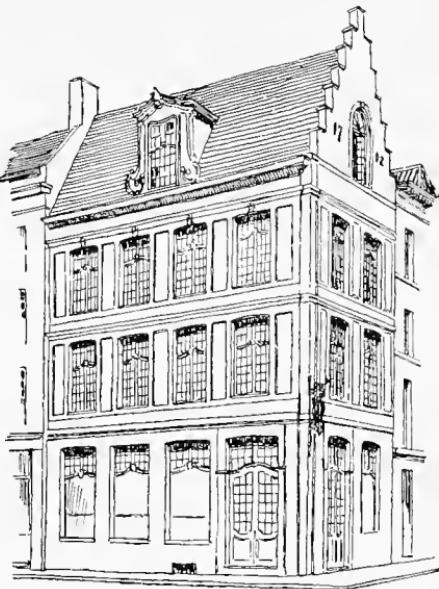
Of the buildings now facing the Place, the one that has undergone least alteration is the Hôtel Bouchoute, situated at the corner of the Rue St. Amand. It is a brick structure three storeys in height, having been built about 1480, a time when a severe type of façade was in vogue : the sundial and weather-vane seem to have been put up in 1682, and in all the old paintings of the Place this house with its flat roof and lion weather-vane figures conspicuously.

On the opposite corner of the Rue St. Amand is the Craenenburg, now an inn, but formerly a private dwelling and probably taking its name from Jacques van Craenenburg, who owned it in 1305. It was not until 1822 that its wooden façade was destroyed and the present one built. This house was the place chosen by the Bruegans for the imprisonment of Maximilian, King of the Romans, in 1488 from February 5th until the 27th; their fear being that Maximilian, never very careful in the keeping of his promises to the burghers, would regain the guardianship of his and Mary of Burgundy's little son Philip, and appoint himself Regent. The Craenenburg was at that time the most magnificent private residence in the Grand' Place and a favourite meeting-place for princes and nobles whence to view the tournaments and fêtes with which Bruges was aglow. In striking contrast with the Craenenburg and the Hôtel Bouchoute is the small eighteenth-century house, at the angle of the Rue des Pierres seen in the sketch on the opposite page which brings forcibly to mind the changes that came with the lapse of centuries over the architecture of the city.

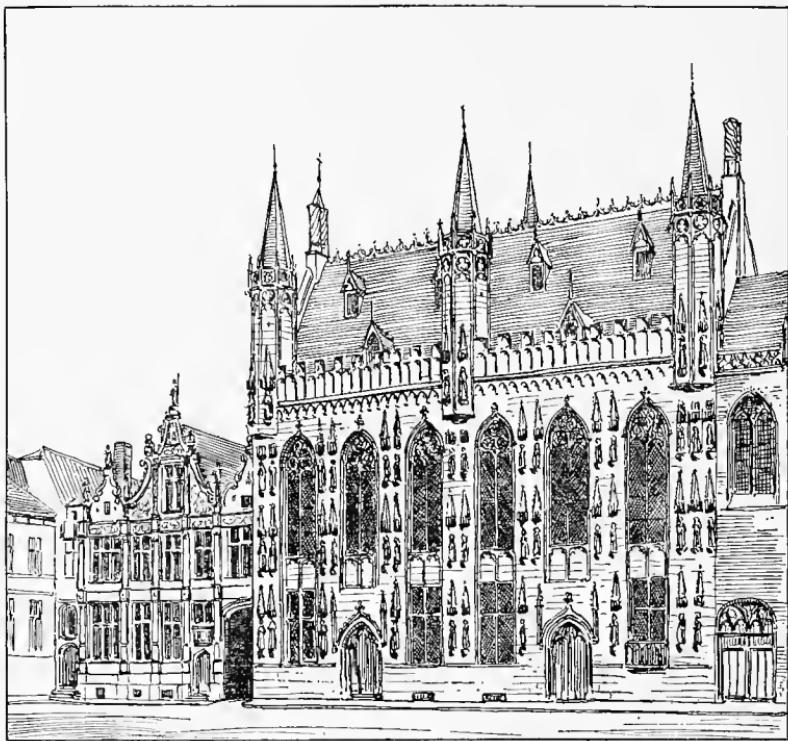
The beginnings of Bruges were cradled in the Bourg, and it is in the Place du Bourg that some of her finest buildings are to be found. Legend, history, poetry, may be met in this square, which has other claims to notice besides that of beauty. Seen

on a day in late spring when the trees in full leaf yet retain their freshness the blending colours of the façades of the Hôtel de Ville and the Ancien Greffe, where purple is lost in grey to become yellow and then brown, are a delight. The dignity of the Place, its quiet spaciousness, gives something of the quality that holds the precincts of an English Cathedral. But the gaiety and out-of-door life of the foreign town has its foothold, for here on its appointed day is held the Flower Market, under the chestnut trees which have been planted on the site where stood for centuries the great Church of St. Donatian, the Cathedral of Bruges. It fell victim to the French Revolutionists at the end of the eighteenth century, but what the Bourg has lost by the havoc wrought on its architecture it has gained in nature's loveliness.

It may add to the understanding of the arrangement of the buildings on the Place du Bourg to



Eighteenth-century house in the  
Grand' Place, at the corner  
of the Rue des Pierres



Hôtel de Ville and the Ancien Greffe

recall the facts that in the twelfth century in the days of Charles the Good, the Church of St. Donatian occupied the north side of the square ; the Loove or Palace of the Counts was on the east side, occupying the site of the present Palais de Justice and adjacent buildings. In the fifteenth century, Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy and Count of Flanders, built an elaborate palace in another quarter of the town, and

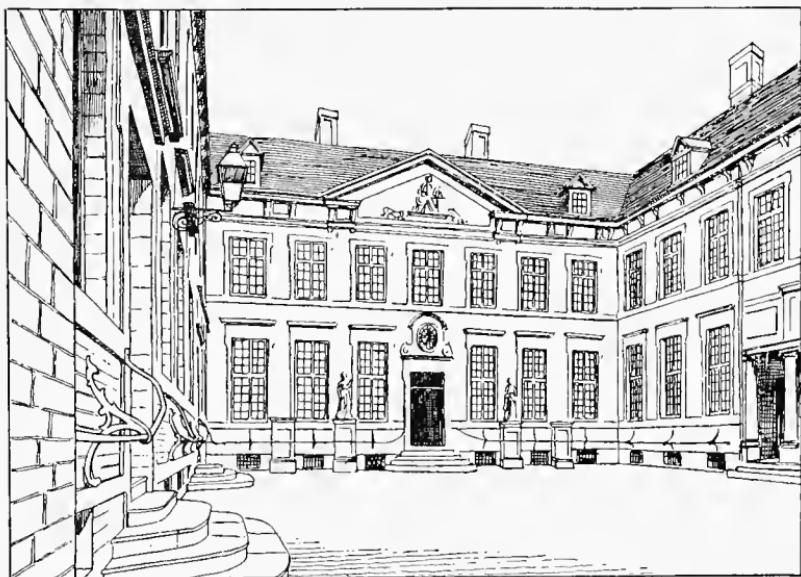
the old Loove Palace, no longer required, was replaced by the Palais du Franc. On the south side of the Place, where now stands the Hôtel de Ville, was the Ghiselhuis, a building dating from the tenth century, when Baldwin I. was Count of Flanders, and built for the accommodation of the Count's guests.

Just as the Belfry stands for freedom, a quality cherished by the Fleming, so another distinguishing characteristic of the race—love of his city—is embodied in the Hôtel de Ville. On their town-hall the citizens of Bruges lavished work, wealth, and order. In 1376, Louis de Maele, Count of Flanders, laid the first stone of this building, and probably within a few years the façade was finished. But it was not until the fifteenth century that the whole building was completed, its rich array of stone-traceried windows and sculptured niches having given opportunity to many of the ablest craftsmen; six of the statues which graced the façade were painted and gilded by Jean Van Eyck. These statues fared ill, falling a prey in the first place to the religious fanatics of the seventeenth century and later to the French Revolutionists. The building suffered restoration in modern times, and the statues now occupying the niches are of modern date. Notwithstanding the losses and alterations brought by ill-fortune, the façade retains the essential lines of its original design, and there is much that is

attractive in the general view of it as seen from the Place du Bourg. In the Grande Salle is a series of wall paintings figuring events in the history of Bruges and of the arts with which she has been identified. A notable scheme of colour decoration, it is of value to those who would picture to themselves the scenes of the past. It was executed about 1894 and was the work of the brothers Albrecht and Jules de Vriendt.

Adjoining the Hôtel de Ville on the east side is the Ancien Greffe Civil. This was rebuilt between 1535 and 1537, and it is one of the few achievements of early Renaissance architecture in Bruges. Designed by Jean Wallot, a foreigner and a *tailleur de pierre*, it was executed by Chrétien Sixdeniers, a native of Bruges and a master-mason. In 1537, Jean Lutterman was entrusted with the gilding of this rather bizarre frontispiece. The exterior is Bruegan in its conception, as also in the carrying out of its details. The statues were the work of Guillaume Aerts, and in 1792 they shared the usual fate at the hands of the Revolutionists, and were restored between 1877 and 1884. The main shell of the structure and the architectural ornament remain, but the decorative work, as so often happens, has been entirely modernised.

The Palais de Justice, a simple straightforward Renaissance building in stone, with a spacious court-



Courtyard of the Palais de Justice

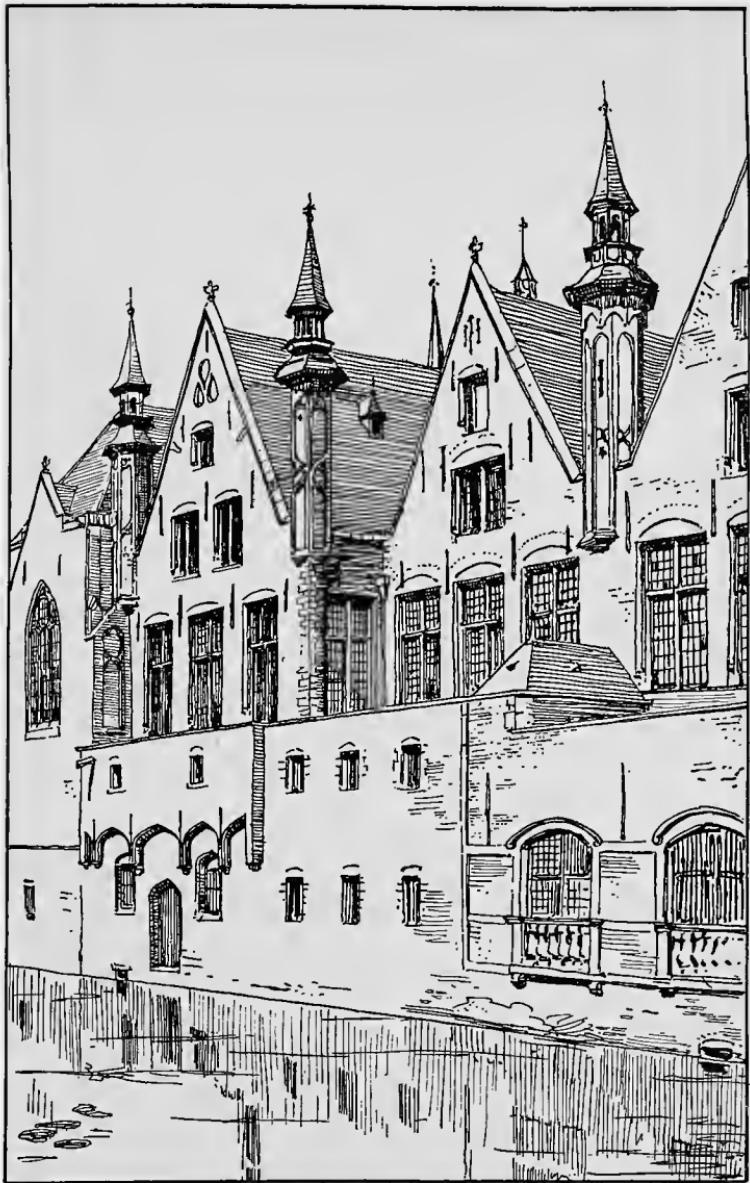
yard—pleasant to look on in itself, but unwelcome as a substitute for the Palais du Franc, the greater part of which was demolished to make way for it—was begun in 1722 and finished in 1727. The part facing the east side of the Place du Bourg occupies what was originally the site of the Loove Palace of the Counts of Flanders, which had been replaced between the years 1434 and 1440 by the Palais du Franc.

Built from the designs of Jean van de Poele and carried out under his superintendence, and later under that of his successors, Godefroid Cauwe and

Roger Wittebroot, the Palais du Franc was perhaps the noblest achievement of Brugean civic architecture, but unfortunately little more than the brick façade looking on the Canal des Marbriers stands to-day. It was the town-hall of the Franc de Bruges, the place where their magistrates administered justice. The Franc was composed of the villagers or *Buiten poorters*, those living outside the gates of the city and not subject to the city's jurisdiction. They occupied a wide-spreading tract of country in the neighbourhood of Bruges, enclosing ninety-one parishes and several towns which to-day are of importance ; among them Ostend, Blankenberghe, and Sluys. It was Philip of Alsace, Count of Flanders, who in 1190 granted the people of the Franc their charter, constituting them "the Court of the Liberty of Bruges." Possibly with an idea of condoning his generous treatment, Philip included in the charter or *Keurbrief* some stringent game laws, from which hardship the people of the Franc were not released until 1477. The private residence of the Seigneur of the Franc was the castle of Tilleghem,<sup>1</sup> situated in richly wooded country about three miles outside Bruges beyond the Porte des Maréchaux.

The façade of the Palais du Franc, facing the Quai des Marbriers, helps in the composition of one

<sup>1</sup> This castle retains its original basement storey and is still surrounded by a wide moat.



Palais du Franc, from the Quai des Marbriers



Archway between the Hôtel de Ville and the Ancien Greffe, as seen from the Pont de l'Ane Aveugle

of Bruges' finest pictures. The structure is of red brick and the four plain gables are flanked by pinnacles of graceful outline, which terminate in a species of open lantern originally crowned by wrought-iron finials, enriched with colour and gilded, the work of Michel Willegs. Some have detected in the lines of this building the influence of Burgundy. The interchange of Burgundian and Flemish influence on the architecture is an interesting result of the Dukes of Burgundy in the fifteenth century being Counts of Flanders. Many a feature Flemish in origin may be seen in the buildings in Bourges, Dijon, and other French towns, while in England the architecture of the Tudor period has certain touches suggestive of Flanders and of Burgundy, due perhaps to the marriage of the English Princess Margaret, sister of Edward IV., with Charles, Duke of Burgundy and Count of Flanders. Margaret was a woman of parts, and among her claims to remembrance is the fact that she was the patroness and friend of William Caxton.

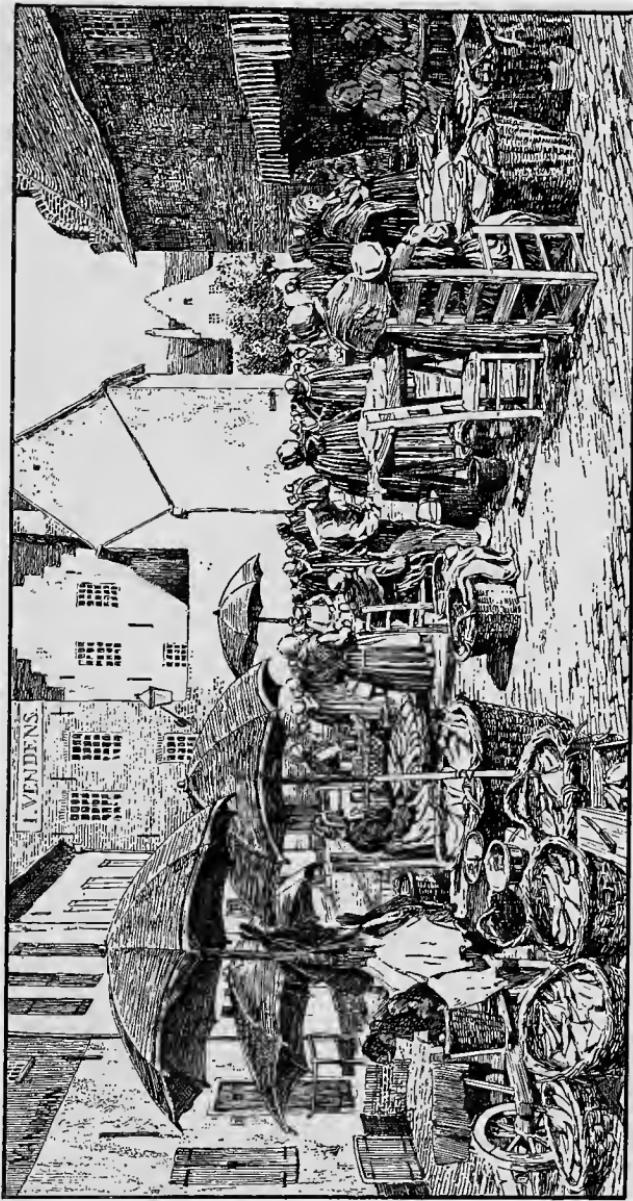
Most persons who visit Bruges seek out the Palais du Franc for its wonderful *cheminée du Franc* in the Council Chamber. This is an admirable piece of craftsmanship, though somewhat overpowering in the mass. It was designed by Lancelot Blondeel and sculptured about 1527 by Guyot

de Beauregard and seventeen other sculptors. The lower part of this sumptuous chimney-piece is carried out in black marble from Dinant ; the frieze above, representing the story of *la chaste Suzanne*, is wrought in alabaster.

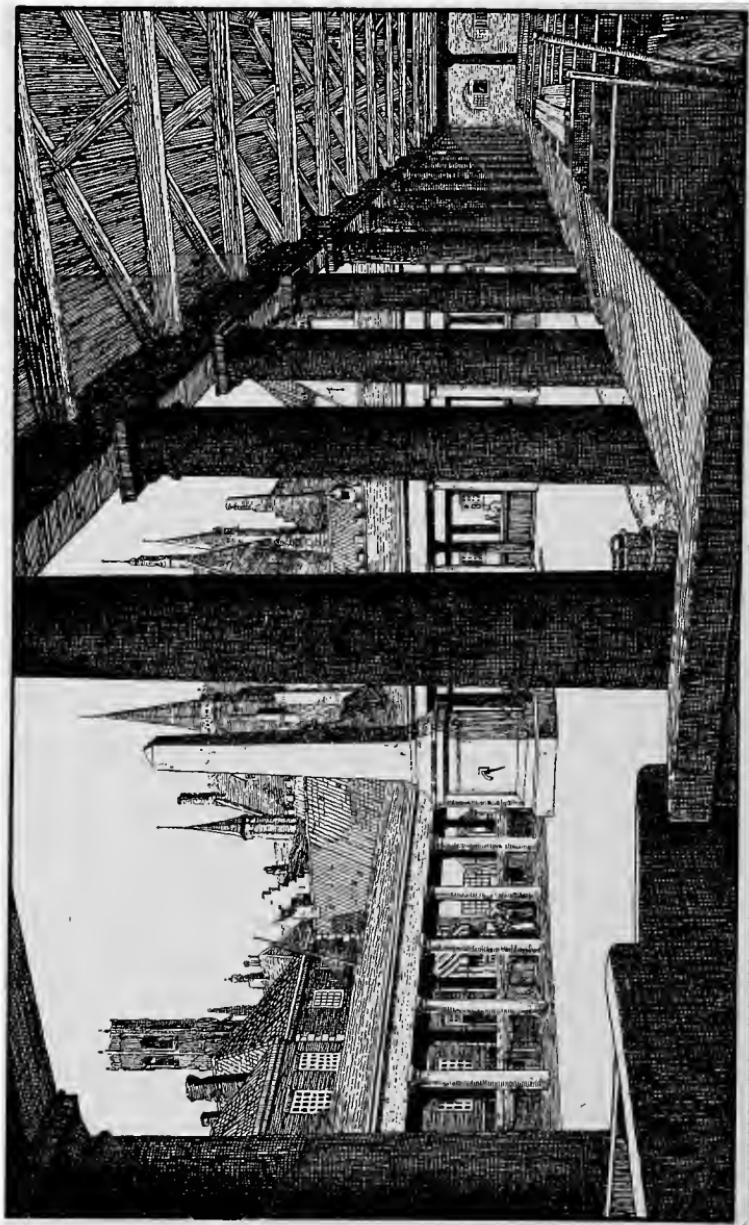
A charming archway thrown between the Greffe and the Hôtel de Ville leads from the Place du Bourg to the Pont de l'Ane Aveugle, whence is gained a view characteristic of Bruges. In the quiet waters of the canal are reflected the gables and chimneys of many a building mellowed by time, and the glow of sunset brings out forgotten beauties and adds a glamour to the tower of the Belfry visible behind it.

Near to the Pont de l'Ane Aveugle is the little Fish Market, known as the Place des Tanneurs. The old-world fashion of the little Place and its background of weather-worn red brick and silver-hued roofs go far to atone for the smell of fish, penetrating though it is on market days. Saturday mornings see the bridge hard by a blaze of curious objects in various metals : candlesticks, kettles, water-jugs, warming-pans. This constitutes the Brass Market, which stretches along the Dyver and is lost in a medley of torn books, garments of sorts, and other repellent objects for sale.

The large Fish Market, situated on what was formerly called the Place de Braamberg, was set up



The Little Fish Market in the Place des Tanneurs



In the Large Fish Market, looking towards the Belfry

in 1821. Its correctly proportioned Doric columns and entablature, forming an open colonnade, and enclosing an oblong space, strike a new note, and its symmetrical lines give quality to the irregular buildings all around. The market is cleverly contrived, giving shelter to both buyers and sellers and at the same time the enjoyment of the advantages of being *en plein air*, while it affords glimpses of the Belfry and other buildings in light the brightness of which is intensified by the dark shadows of the colonnades. This quarter is rich in fruit and vegetable stalls ; the colour and fragrance of the wares offered by trim old women in check dresses, small shawls and white caps, are not least among the many pleasures met with on a morning's walk.

Not far away, washed by the green waters of the Reie, is the Place Van Eyck—centred by a bronze statue of the celebrated artist set up in 1808—with much else of interest and beauty to offer. On the north stands a building in white stone, the upper storey of which since 1883 has been occupied by the Library. Here are preserved many treasures, among them a series of works printed at Bruges between the years 1475 and 1484 by Colard Mansion, the famed Bruegan printer, friend of William Caxton and protégé of Louis of Bruges, Lord of Gruuthuuse. The lower part of this building was formerly the Grand Tonlieu, or Office of the Market Dues

Collector ; it is distinguished by the beauty of its porch, which seems to have been erected by Peter of Luxemburg about 1478. He held the post of "Collector," and his arms and quarterings, together with the order of the Golden Fleece, are sculptured on the porch. Since 1641 this storey has been used for a weighing house, and in 1878 the building was restored. Next door was the lodge of the *pynders*, or carriers, built about 1470 ; the figures of carriers sculptured on the stone corbels make appropriate allusion to the uses of the building.

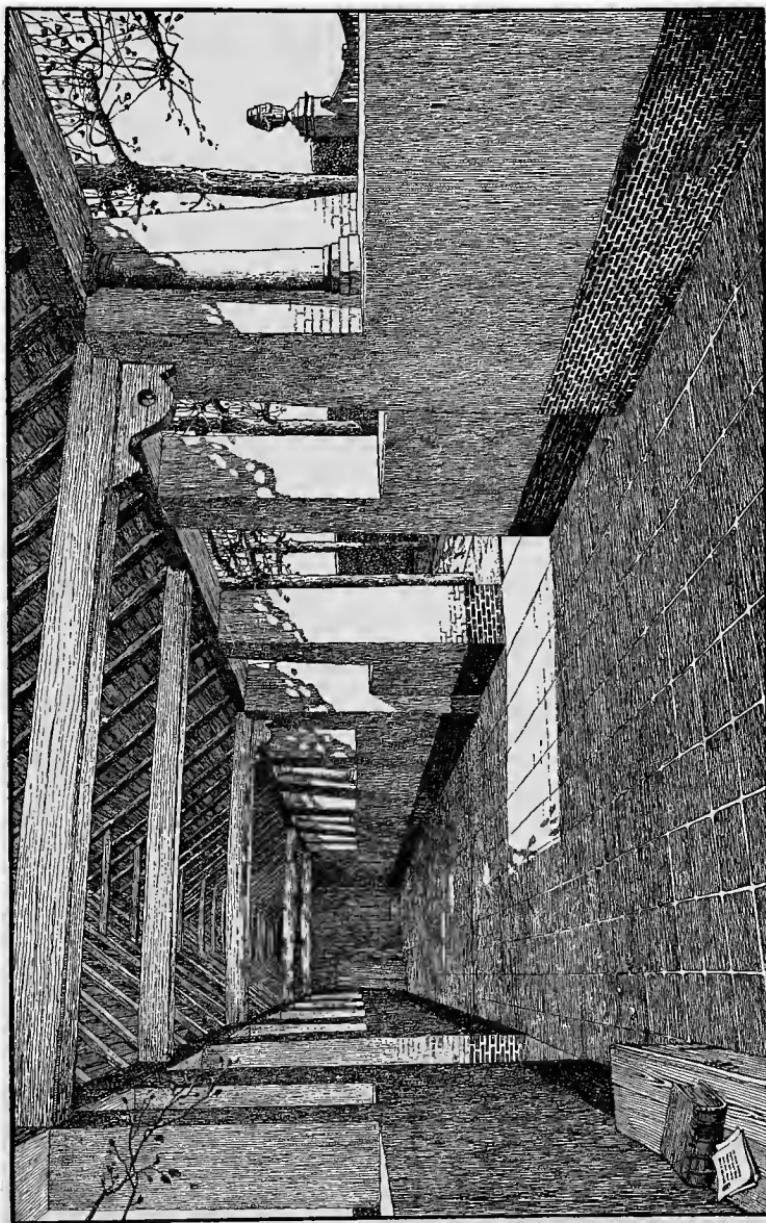
At the corner of the Rue de l'Académie is a large building of grey stone known as the Poorters Loge. Dating probably from the fourteenth century, it was rebuilt in the fifteenth century and again between 1899 and 1903. In the fourteenth century it was the meeting-place of the *Poorters*, the citizens of Bruges ; it was also the headquarters of a tilting club known as the White Bears' Club, and in 1417 authority was given by the town to place the "White Bear" with the arms of the "Société Chevaleresque" in the niche on the corner of the building. The bear now occupying that position is a copy of the original, which is in the Archæological Museum. "The oldest citizen in Bruges," the bear is a familiar sight to wayfarers in the city. It is a favourite appendage to many a building, and sometimes appears a fascinating little creature perched on a door-post



The Library in the Place Van Eyck

clutching a shield. In 1719 the Poorters Loge was converted into an Academy for Art Students, and it is now the resting-place of the city archives, with an appearance of modernity and little left to indicate its original character.

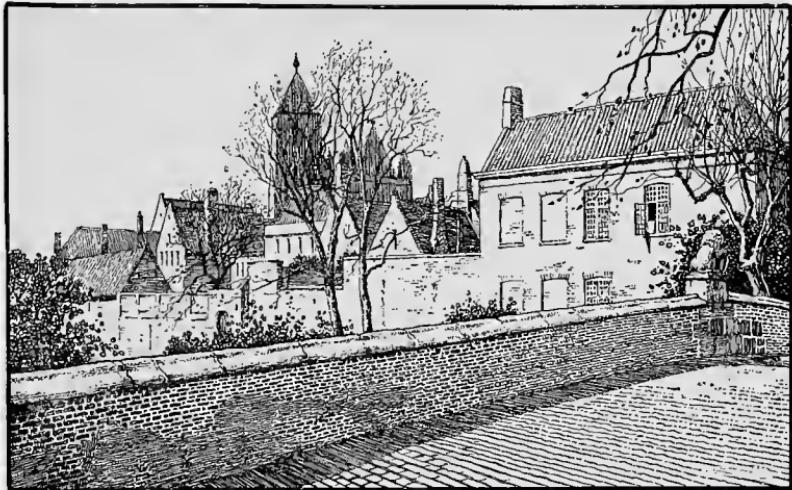
A large number of the public buildings in Bruges are of modern date and there is no need for their discussion here, but amongst smaller buildings put to various uses are some of interest both from the character of their architecture and from their historical associations. An example of this class is the building of St. Sebastian's Guild of Archers, situated at the end of the Rue des Carmes and bordering on the ramparts, where may be seen turning the sails of the two windmills left to Bruges. From early days archery held a favoured place amongst the pursuits of the high-born Bruegan. In the fourteenth century the members of the Guild of St. Sebastian formed the bodyguard of the Counts of Flanders. The present building dates from the latter part of the sixteenth century, the turret having been rebuilt between the years 1562 and 1573, and the cloisters or covered gallery dating from 1579. These cloisters, together with the pleached alley—along which the archers shot their arrows—and well cared-for flower gardens where a September sun shines on begonias and agapanthus, are the acme of coolness and content. Amongst past members the Club numbers Charles II.



Cloister of the Guild of Archers of St. Sebastian

of England and his brother the Duke of Gloucester. The bust of the exiled king stands over the chimney-piece in the Salle, and kept in a case is a silver arrow, the gift to the Guild of the Duke of Gloucester. The royal brothers lived in Bruges from June 1656 until February 1658, and it can be imagined that their play in the pleached alley helped to cheer their exile. The covered gallery with its white simplicity might have been the resort of monks and scribes rather than a playground echoing the merry shout and hearty oath of the pleasure-seeker. It seems not to belong to Bruges—a thing curiously apart and complete in its beauty.

The historic fact that the drying up of the Swyn lost Bruges her trade readily suggests the truth that from being the premier city in Europe she became poor and commercially unimportant. But the loss thereby brought to her architectural and æsthetic wealth is not easily gauged. Among the most admirable distinctions of Bruges, when at the height of her prosperity, were the palaces built by merchants from all parts of Europe. These palaces were the headquarters of the foreign traders. Of some not a stone remains; of others, meagre fragments give the pleasure of recalling the name when one nears the site. But none stands to tell of the loveliness that gave to Bruges the glamour of a fairy city.



View from the Pont des Lions

## CHAPTER III STREETS AND QUAYS OF BRUGES

**I**N no respect is the mediæval character of Bruges more surely expressed than in the lines of her streets. The mingling of their irregularity with the open spaces of the *places* and the straightness of the canals prevents monotony and gives to a walk in Bruges the charm of the unexpected, a charm experienced here only less keenly than in Venice, that most bewildering of cities to find one's way about on foot. It would be impossible to see the sights of Bruges and to traverse

her principal streets without a good deal of retracing of steps, and thus it is impossible to give a mental line of conduct to the reader which shall be so direct as not to go over the same ground more than once.

An easy means of coming under the spell of the city is to take a boat along the canals. In this way much will be seen that is not apparent from the streets. Not otherwise can so satisfactory a view be obtained of some notable buildings, and incidental delights are not wanting, such as the glint of light on the water through trees, and the views up steep wooded banks on the heights of which are houses of mellow colour and irregular form. Bridges wrought in stone mark stages on the journey, and among them one of the happiest achievements of the Bruegan bridge builders—the Pont des Lions, which was built in 1627 by Jean de Wachtere. Not long afterwards two lions were sculptured and placed on the marble balustrade : these were the work of Jerome Stalpaert, and one of them still occupies its original position, the other having been replaced by a modern reproduction. Fortunate in its situation this bridge is equally attractive whether approached by road or water. Those who vaunt the attraction of Bruges insist on her likeness to Venice, and yet it is her charms that emphasise the difference. Anything more unlike seeing Venice from a gondola than being



Quai Vert, showing the Maison du Pélican

in a boat on the water that runs under the Pont des Lions it would be difficult to experience in a European city intersected by canals. Looking citywards the eye meets the rich foliage of trees, whence emerge high roofs, gables and chimneys, and beyond them the spire of St. Jacques. Glancing down the canal a sylvan scene worthy of Devonshire presents itself. A neighbouring bridge seen to advantage from the canal is the Pont de la Clef.

Viewed from dark quiet waters, the walls of the Hôpital St. Jean, of the Hôtel Gruuthuuse and of



View from the Quai du Rosaire

the Palais du Franc rekindle the life of an earlier age, and as daylight fades the reality of the past becomes an oppression. White swans glide along river and canals, and however legendary may be the story of their coming to Bruges their presence to-day is a beautiful fact and a source of pride to the citizens. The property of the Corporation, they are well cared for. It is often said and written that their establishment in Bruges dates from the death of Pierre Lanchals in 1488, the story being that after the execution of his favourite, Maximilian, moved by remorse, gave a mandate to the people of

Bruges that swans should ever be maintained in memory of Lanchals. The facts that the name Lanchals signifies "long neck" and that the swan figures in the family arms, have perhaps helped towards the belief in this legend, but long before this undeserved death Bruges was the abode of swans. To quote from a recent author :—" Bien avant la mort de Pierre Lanchals, les fiers et mélancoliques oiseaux avaient fait de la belle Commune leur séjour de préférence. Dans le tableau de Pise où l'on voit Bruges au xv<sup>e</sup> siècle, ils peuplent les fossés, comme de célestes gardiens immobilisés dans une moire transparente. . . ." <sup>1</sup> It seems that the affection of Bruges for her swans is reciprocated, any effort to transport them elsewhere having resulted in a quick return to their old haunts.

The quays of Bruges are as tranquil as they are numerous, and each has its allurement. A walk among the less obvious quays is rewarded by many an unexpected find and pleasurable glimpse, while from the Quai du Rosaire is gained that popular impression of Bruges rendered familiar to all the world by the photographer. The Quai des Marbriers gives an admirable view of the Palais du Franc, and from the Quai Vert is seen to advantage the Pont du Cheval. Two houses stand out from amongst others on the Quai Vert : one is the Maison

<sup>1</sup> *Psychologie d'une Ville : Essai sur Bruges.* Fierens-Gevaert, 1908.

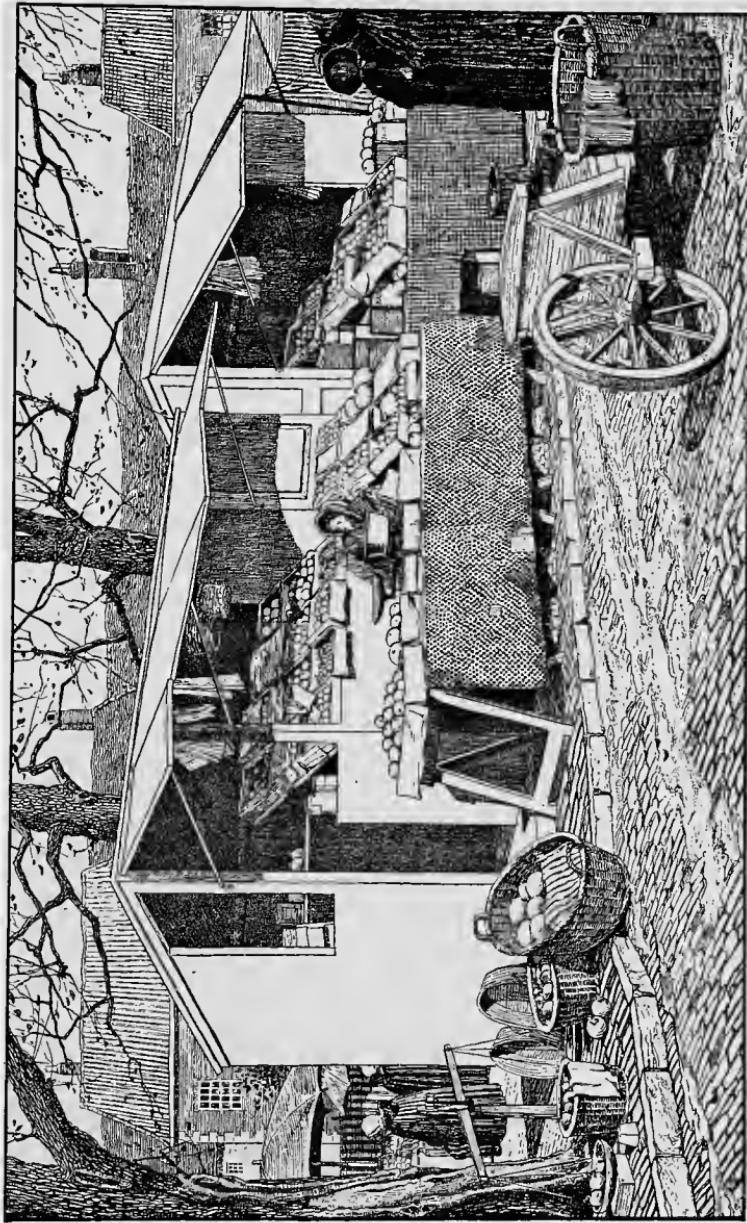
du Pélican, dating from 1707 and originally a *Godshuis*, the other, which adjoins it, is equally interesting and earlier in date, having been built in 1634.

The Quai de la Poterie, notable for its length and the suggestive interest of the narrow streets leading out of it, contains the Theological College in which is enclosed the old Abbey of the Dunes, which was transferred to Bruges from the outlying district of Furnes in 1623. In the church of the Hospice de la Poterie, also situated on this quay, is the coffin of the third Abbot of Dunes, Blessed Idesbalde Van der Gracht, whose relics were hidden in a house in the Rue de Jérusalem (No. 31) from 1796 until 1799, when the French Revolutionists were devastating Bruges.

Only those who walk beside the canals can know the charm of the quays, the vistas yielded by the long straight margins of the water in which are reflected colour and form, the gradual coming of the barges, the graceful course of the swans. Life and freshness are what they tell of, but in the tangle of smaller quays whose very names concern places and people from whom this Belgian city has long since parted one is caught by the unforgotten past.

It is in the streets that many of the individual aspects of the city and the life of the people are to be found. Unlike Venice, Bruges enjoys a wealth of

Fruit Stalls in the Place Simon Stevin



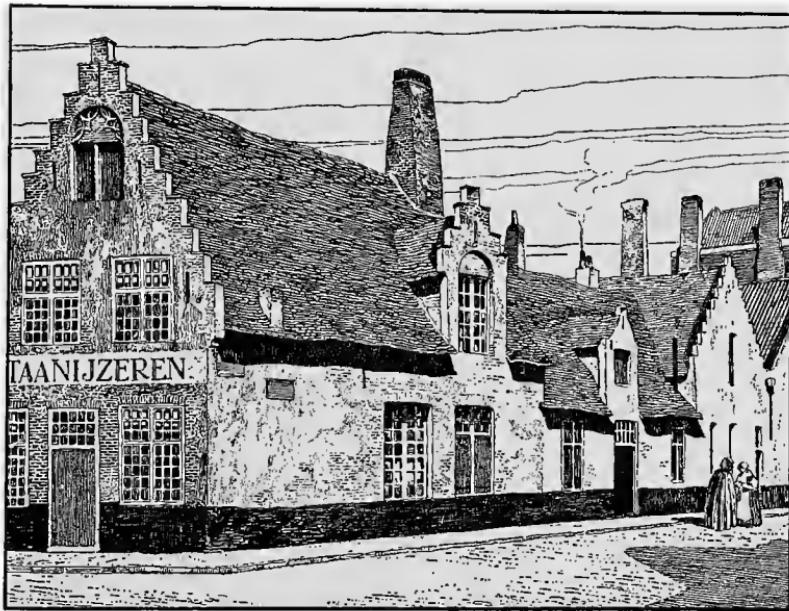


Back of the Queue de Béguinage

trees, and her streets abound in horses, wagons, and carts. The Flemish horses are noble beasts, and their colour—more often than not chestnut or grey—accords well with the green of the wagons. Between the outlying districts and the city there is constant traffic. The main street of Bruges and in some sense the finest is the Rue des Pierres, which is a continuation of the Rue Sud du Sablon (at the end of which is the railway station) and leads to the Grand' Place. In this street are the Cathedral Church of St. Sauveur, many houses with handsome façades, and some good shops. Looking along it towards the Grand' Place the Belfry is seen towering above the gabled houses. Leading out of the Rue des Pierres is the Place Simon Stevin, planted with lime trees, which make a comely setting for the daily market of fruit and vegetables presided over by white-capped old women. The little Place is further adorned with a statue of Simon Stevin, who lived in the sixteenth and early part

of the seventeenth century, a lover of travel and famed for his knowledge of mathematics.

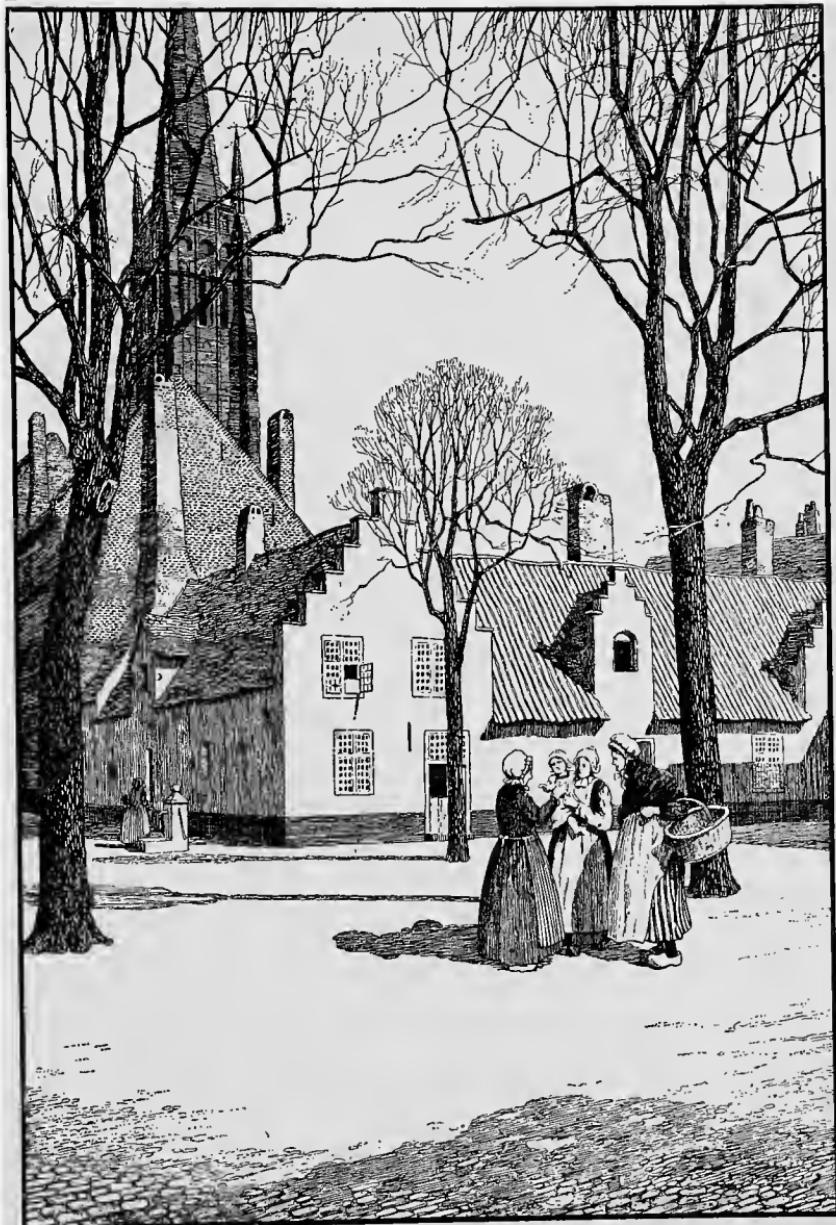
Leaving this little square and passing Notre Dame the Rue Ste. Catherine is soon reached, and here is a doorway of interest giving access to the Godshuis Herstberghe, one of the almshouses in which Bruges is rich and of which more is told in Chapter IV. From this street a view is obtained of an old brick chimney-stack recalling in its design some of the sixteenth-century work in the eastern

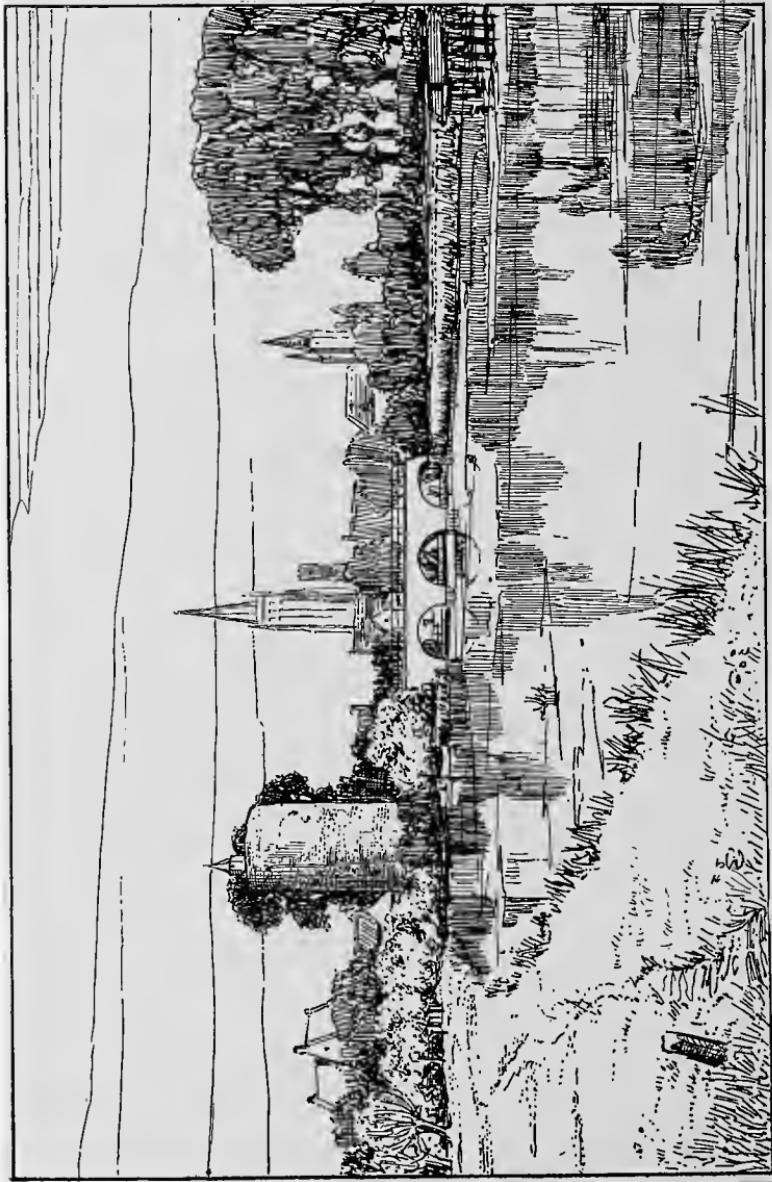


Corner of the Rue Neuve de Gand and the  
Rue de la Porte de Gand

counties of England. Farther along, the Rue de la Vigne brings a turning into the Place de la Digue, a charming open space whence through acacia trees is seen the spire of Notre Dame. Situated outside the limits of early Bruges, this Place suffered from the floods that accompany a Flemish winter, and as a safeguard, in 1401, the level of the ground was raised. The Rue Ste. Catherine leads to a land luxuriant in nurseries of begonias and bay trees. A short walk along the well-wooded ramparts brings in view the Minnewater or Lac d'Amour, the source of many a song and picture. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the waters of this lake, whence is seen one of the fairest aspects of Bruges, reflected vessels rich in merchandise, boats filled with knights and ladies bound on revelry. In this harbour there met beauty and strength, wealth and laughter. In contrast to these memories is the line of small houses forming the Queue de Béguinage, each with a little Dutch garden before it and at the back offering a mellow coloured study in roofs, gables, and chimneys.

Many believe that to have seen the Grand' Place is to know Bruges. Far as this is from the truth, it would be idle to deny that from a consecutive watch of those crossing the Place is gained the best idea of the daily life of the city. A varying scene: early morning brings milk and vegetable carts—long, low





The Minnewater, looking towards Notre Dame

vehicles unlike anything in use in England to-day, drawn by dogs ; then come long wagons, the horses harnessed to them glorious in their strength and colour. At certain hours of the day black robed priests throng the Place, and constantly is there a passing to and fro of brown habited monks and friars. Nuns too : some in black with white coif and others in blue and grey. Anon there rides past a troop of cavalry gay with colours, black, yellow, and red. A funeral procession walks through on its way to Notre Dame with an accompaniment of music. The coffin is carried by men ; there is no horror, and dignity dwells in the simplicity of the last journey.

Another sight familiar to the Place is the long cart filled with bay trees in green tubs bound for some distant place. Bruges and her outskirts are pervaded with bay trees, arousing envy in the English visitor.

The early hours of Saturday morning see the arrival of country people with wares for the market ; stalls are set up betimes and equipped with all manner of merchandise. A motley scene evoking a regret that time cannot be shifted back, so sombre and lacking character is the dress of the sellers. Some of their goods are more attractive, and the wish arises that the market women would don the headgear they offer for sale, nice ample bonnets, long in the head, made of white straw, lined with scarlet flannel spotted with black, the only trimming a



In the Rue des Cordouaniers  
the Marché aux Grains.

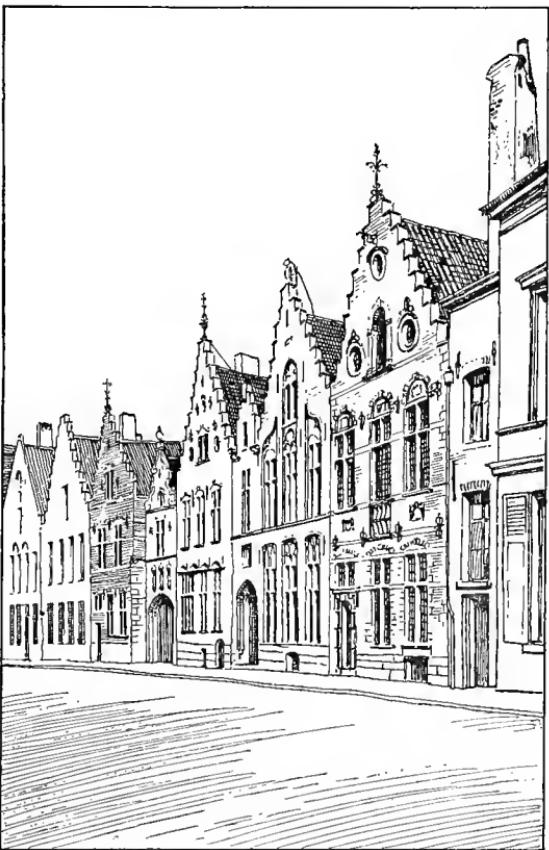
The social and convivial elements in the Flemish character find an echo in the north side of the Square, which is composed almost altogether of hotels and restaurants, some of which date from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Among them

narrow black velvet ribbon by means of which the head-dress may be tied beneath the chin. In former days the fish market was held in the Grand' Place, in front of the house now called la Civière d'Or, but in 1745 it was transferred to the Place Braamberg and took the place of

is the Panier d'Or—rebuilt about 1680—a name associated with many a pleasant visit to Bruges. The windows of this hotel have the advantage of commanding the Belfry and the whole of the Place, thus ensuring vivid memories of a stay there.

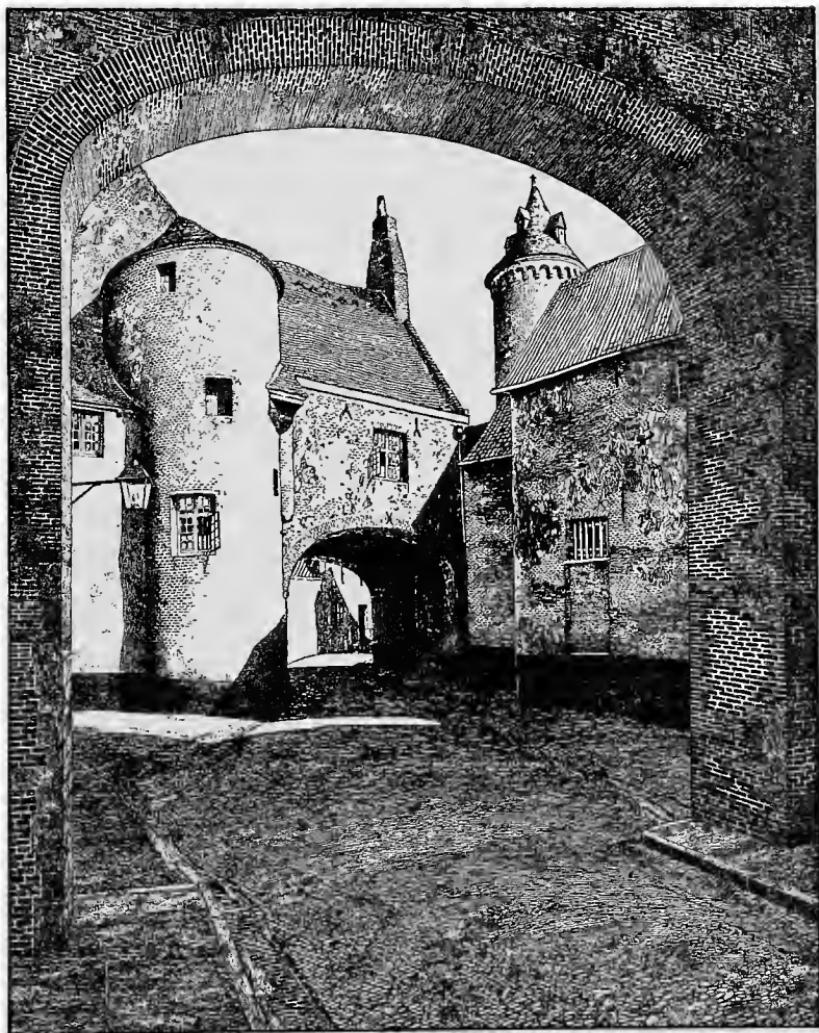
In the midst of the Place are the statues of Pierre de Coninck and Jan Breidel, a work of modern sculpture reminiscent of dangers from which her citizens have rescued Bruges and of the value they set on freedom.

In the Rue aux Laines (frontispiece), which leads out of the Grand' Place, is a large stone house

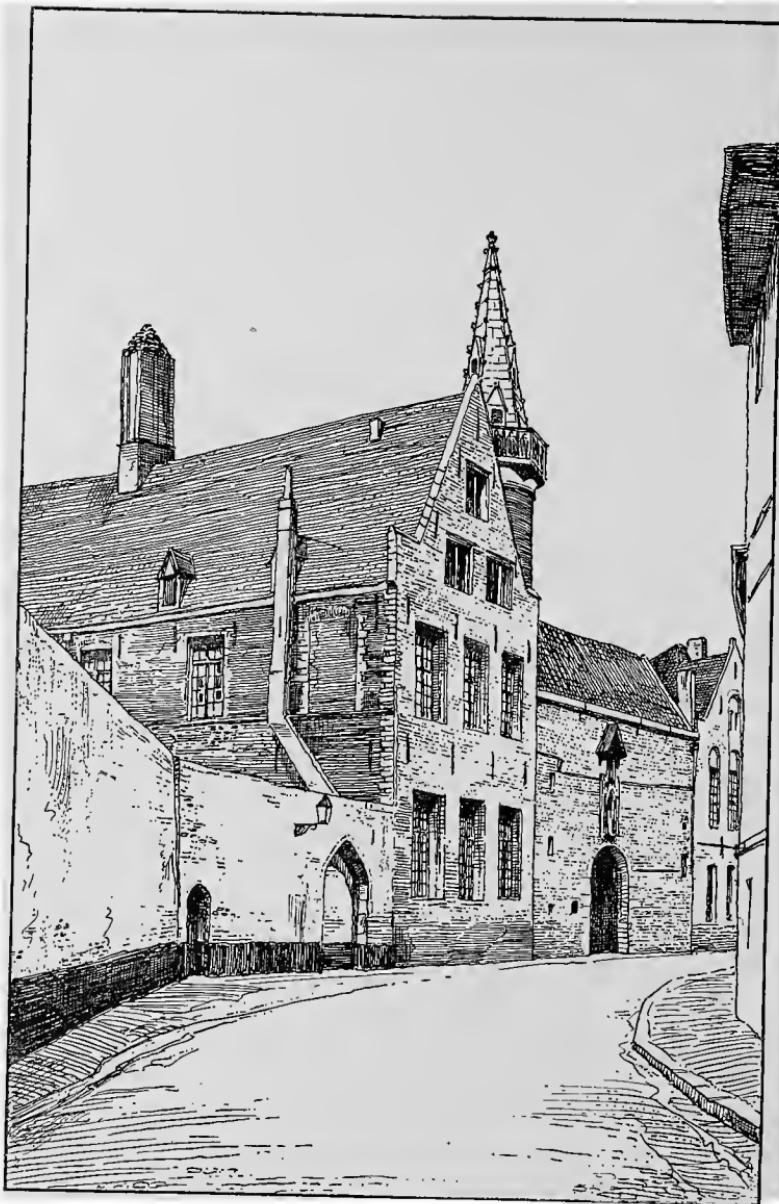


In the Rue du Vieux Bourg

(B 41) built about 1480. It is not of much interest architecturally, as it has lost many of its original characteristics and was restored in 1909, but it is memorable because here the relic of the Précieux Sang was concealed from March 1578 until November 1584, on one of the occasions when the city was besieged by the men of Ghent. On Sunday, November 30, 1584, the relic was carried in procession to the church of St. Basil in the Bourg. Out of the Rue aux Laines runs the Rue du Vieux Bourg, a quiet street with a remarkable series of crow-step gabled houses, and amongst others of interest in this street is a large red brick building (Nos. 23 and 25 C) which, in the middle of the nineteenth century, was the dwelling of Max Laurin, a friend to literature and art. Among the guests who often enjoyed his hospitality was Erasmus. Before Laurin's day the house, then smaller and of less pretence, belonged to Pierre Lanchals. About the middle of the seventeenth century Thomas, Lord Preston, lived in the Rue du Vieux Bourg, and here Charles II. accepted his hospitality from April 22, 1658 until on June 3 he left to hold his Court at the Casselburg in the Rue Haute. South of the Grand' Place and at the end of a narrow turning out of Rue St. Jacques is the Boterhuis. It was built before the year 1540, over part of the Hôtel de Ghistelle, and superseded the old butter and cheese



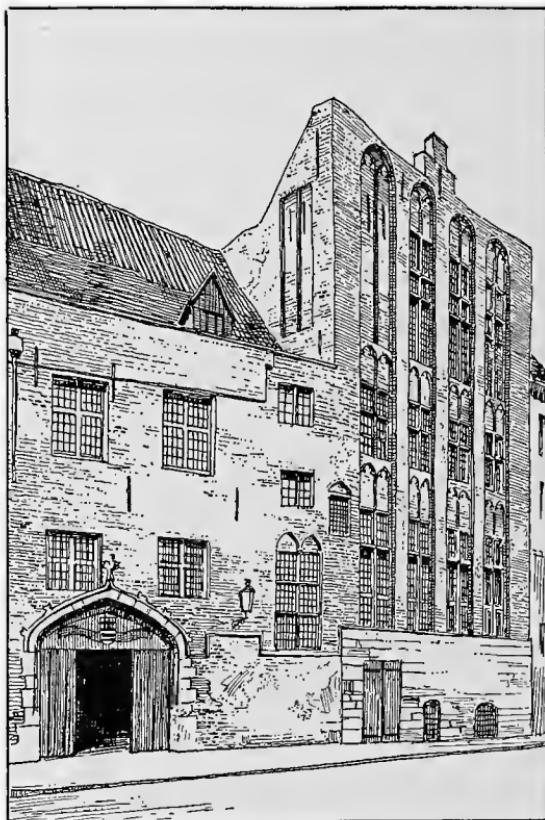
The Boterhuis and the Ghistelhof



The Hôtel Bladelin

market which had for years been situated in the space behind the ancient church of St. Christopher, long since demolished. In 1834 the new Boterhuis was converted into a concert hall, and is said to possess excellent acoustic properties.

The Ghistelhof, of whose lofty tower a view is obtained over the ruddy roofs of the Boterhuis, stands in the Rue des Aiguilles and dates from 1460. Although not nearly so extensive as in former days when the dwelling of the Lords of Ghistelle, it is quite an interesting example of the town house of the Flemish noble of the fifteenth century. Another and perhaps more attractive instance is the Hôtel Bladelin, also in the Rue des Aiguilles. A man of note in his day, Bladelin held the offices of Guardian of the Royal Treasury, Chamberlain to Charles the Bold, and Treasurer of the Golden Fleece. He built the house before 1440 and extended it between the years 1468 and 1472. In 1480 it was the property and home of a rich Florentine merchant, Thomas Portinari, the agent in Bruges for the Medici. In 1816 it came into the possession of the Sœurs de l'Assomption. Here they have a school for the daughters of the poor, and teach lace making *gratis* to any girls who wish to learn. In a niche over the entrance is a statue of the Madonna and Child, and below them kneels Pierre Bladelin : this elaborate piece of work is a careful reproduction of the



The 'Black House'

rooms are still to be seen carved on the oak corbels to the massive beams of the ceiling the arms of Burgundy and those of the Medici together with the emblem of the Golden Fleece.

In the near neighbourhood of the Rue des Aiguilles, about half-way up the Rue des Tonneliers,

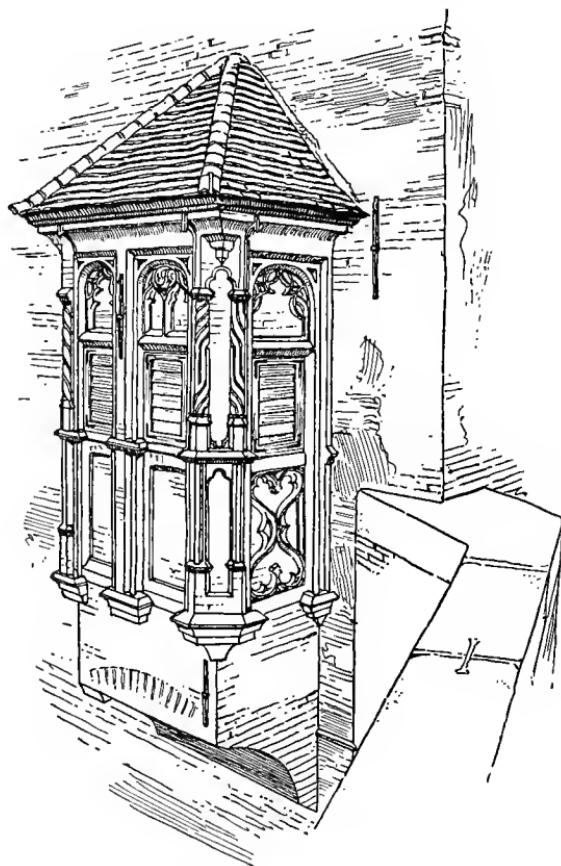
original and was placed there about ten years ago. On the court-yard side, let into the wall, are two roundels, one representing Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy and Count of Flanders, and the other his wife Margaret of York, sister of Edward IV.: in one of the spacious

stands a solid house of sombre appearance called the 'Black House.'

This name together with a certain obscurity in its history has lent something of romance to the building, and it has been said to be the old home of the Knights Templars : this, however, is not the case, nor should credence be placed in the tradition that it was a depot for the wares of the cloth merchants of Valenciennes. The 'Black House' was built about the year 1480, and seems to have suffered little alteration. It is now used as a café.



Angle of the Rue Philipstock



Oriel Window by the Pont Flamand

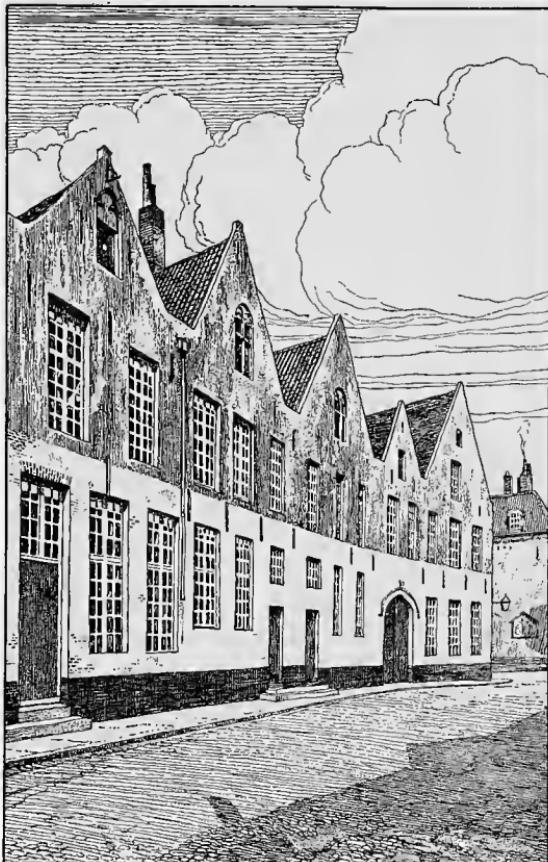
guarded in the churches of Bruges.

Projecting over the waters of the canal beside the Pont Flamand is an oriel window in brick known as the 'tribune.' In the sixteenth century the house was the property and dwelling of Herman Van

The Rue Pourbus, which leads out of the Rue Flamande and is lined with tall gabled houses, takes its name from Pierre Pourbus, a man of many distinctions. He lived in the sixteenth century and won fame as an architect, a geographer, and a painter: his pictures are among the treasures

Oudveldé,  
Dean of the  
Gold and Sil-  
ver Smiths,  
and in 1514  
he built this  
window with  
its delicately  
moulded  
brickwork  
and traceries,  
thereby se-  
curing an ex-  
cellent light  
for his work-  
table as well  
as adding a  
beautiful  
feature to his  
house. The  
citizens of  
Bruges have  
always been

proud of this distinctive achievement in architecture,  
and in 1877 the window was restored at the expense  
of the town. At the present day it is sheltered and,  
in spring and summer, veiled by a chestnut tree of  
noble stature and abundant foliage.



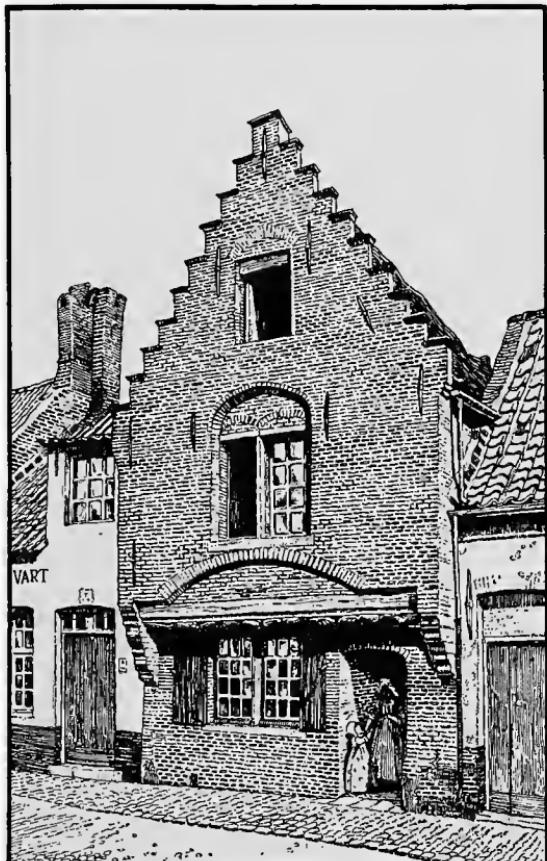
In the Rue St. Georges



In the Rue des Potiers

Near to the Pont Flamand is the Pont des Augustins, of all the stone bridges in Bruges the most finely wrought. It was built in 1391 at the expense of the town to replace the wooden bridge which had been erected in 1294 by the Augustinian friars, whose convent was hard by.

Not the least interesting street is the Rue St. Georges. It was in a house in this street that Memlinc lived from 1479 until his death. The house has disappeared, but its site is said to be in what is now the garden of No. 20. On the opposite side



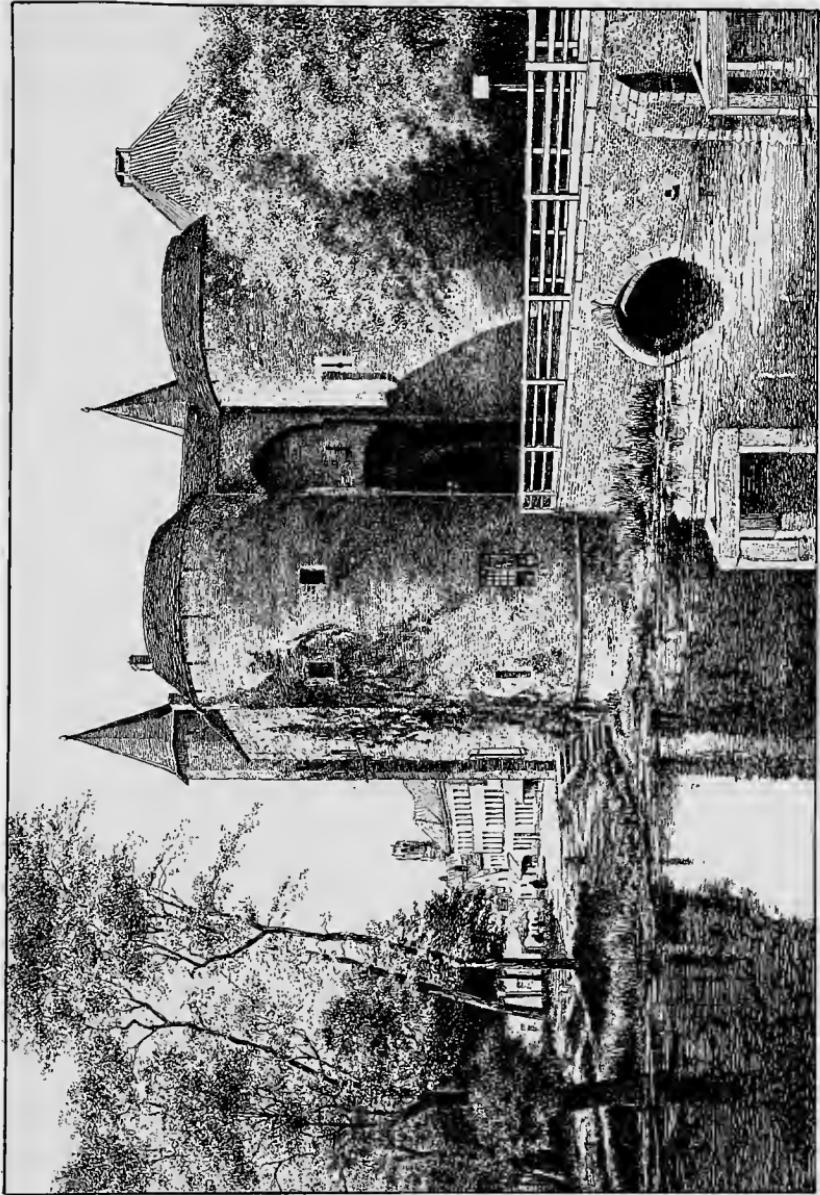
In the Rue des Ciseaux

of the Rue St. Georges is the École Normale, a large modern structure modelled on the Bruegan architecture of the sixteenth century. From the grounds emerges a red brick tower dating from 1510, all that remains of the Archers' Crossbow Club of St. Georges and St. Denis. Originally a good deal higher than at present, the tower still contains a stone staircase. After encountering in every street such endless variety of stepped and shaped gables, the five plain gables in a row of the houses seen in the sketch on page 77 offer a welcome change and by their reticence attract attention.

One of the most picturesque and richly coloured streets in Bruges is the Rue des Potiers, leading from the Rue St. Georges to the Rue des Baudets. It is one of numerous instances where there is no building of outstanding importance, and yet all the houses point to the genius which characterised the brick builders of Bruges in giving variety to their dwellings and solving problems as they arose.

In Bruges, as in many another old city, quite beautiful work is found amidst unlikely surroundings. A noteworthy instance is in the Rue des Ciseaux, a street paved with peculiarly uneven cobble stones and thronged with children, where the eye is refreshed by an old house with quaint brick façade and richly carved oak beam carried on projecting corbels and supporting the overhanging upper storeys, the whole

The Porte de Gand



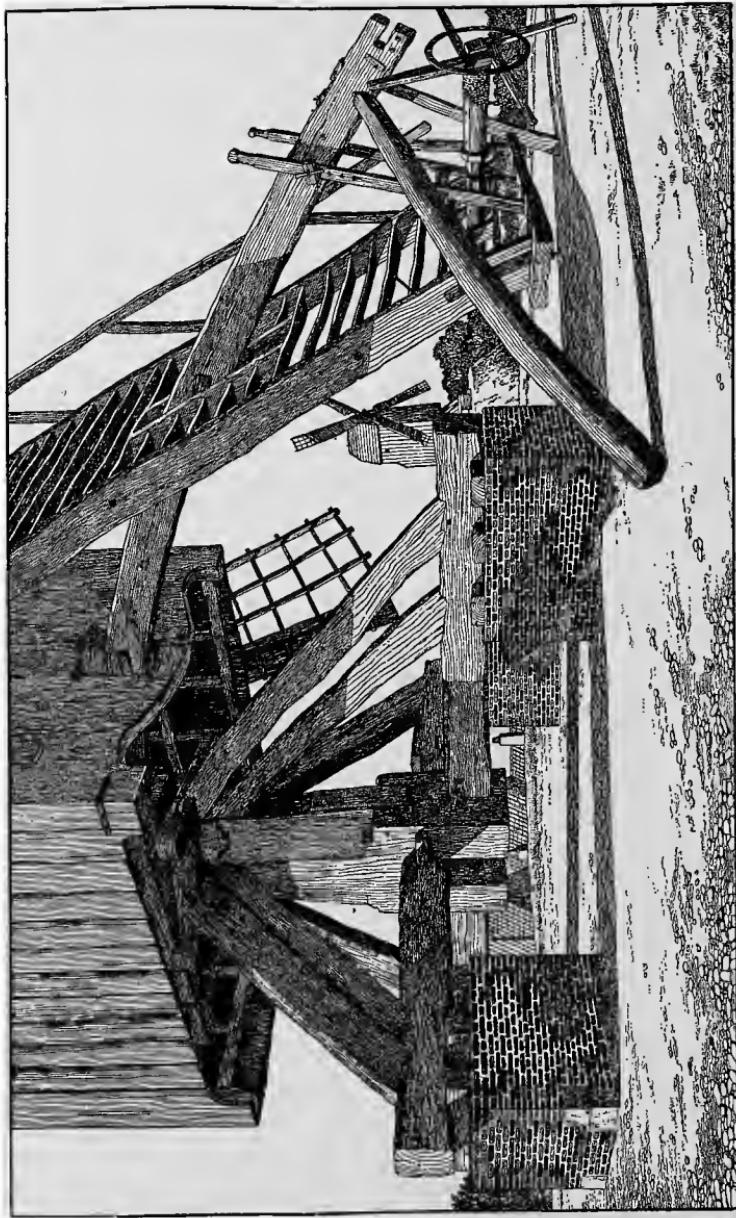


On the Ramparts near the Porte Ste. Croix

reminiscent of wealth no longer enjoyed in that quarter of Bruges.

Throughout the streets of the city on many a façade are seen iron rings the object of which dates back to the time when Bruges was famed for the splendour of her fêtes. In honour of these fêtes the citizens decorated the streets, and the façades of their houses were gay with festoons and branches of trees which were supported by iron rings. Localities, societies and individuals alike competed for the prizes to be awarded to those responsible for the best display and the most brilliant illumination. A pleasant finish is given to many a house by a niche in which stands a small statue of a saint : one very well-preserved may be seen at an angle house in the Rue St. Nicholas (p. 4). More often than not the statue in such a niche is that of the Virgin Mary. So general was her presence that in mediæval times Bruges was given the name of Maria Stadt, the city of Mary.

Two distinctions of Bruges are impressed on the memory of the wayfarer : the cobble pavements and the irrepressible quality of the children. It may be that the Flemish child has leanings towards art, it may be a desire to learn, or it may be a delight in displeasing : from whichever cause, the artist on his camp-stool is beset and has rather the appearance of an object surrounded by bees. When winter makes them indisposed to loiter, the children are less irritating :



Windmills outside the Porte Ste. Croix

arrayed in cloaks with peaked hoods, and clattering along in clogs, they look like cheery elves and win forgiveness for their summer failings. The cobble stones, though wearying to the unaccustomed, have an æsthetic value, and the pattern on the side-walks is dainty.

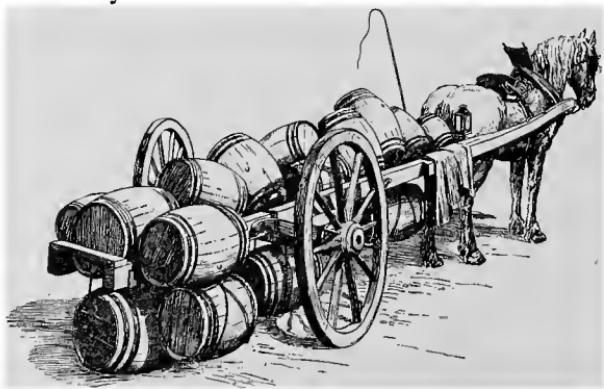
The scarcity of beggars and the absence of signs of distressful poverty in the streets are a noticeable and agreeable characteristic of the city.

In the fourteenth century, when Bruges was surrounded by a moat, the safety of the city depended not a little upon the fortification of her Portes. In 1382 these gates were destroyed by the men of Ghent, when led by Philip Van Artevelde in hot pursuit of Louis of Maele. To the rescue came Nicholas Barbesaen, burgomaster and city treasurer. He says of himself : “I showed great diligence anent the public buildings of the town, such as bridges, fountains, gates, towers and the like, the greater number of which were rebuilt during the time that I was burgomaster and treasurer of this city.”<sup>1</sup> Later misfortunes have befallen the gates, but the Porte Ste. Croix, the Porte de Gand, the Porte d’Ostende and the Porte des Maréchaux retain something of their original character, and help to keep alive the memory of mediæval Bruges. Near the Porte Ste. Croix are

<sup>1</sup> *The Story of Bruges.* By Ernest Gilliat-Smith (Mediæval Towns Series), 1909.

the only remaining windmills, two in number. Picturesque and interesting in themselves, they recall a day when the air around was stirred by turning sails. From this point is gained an admirable view of the city.

It would not be easy to decide from which spot Bruges is seen to greatest advantage, but that spot should be sought outside the city and not inside. Fragments of the present and of the past are obvious to those who walk in her streets or ply the waters of her canals, but it is from the ramparts that Bruges as a whole is to be seen. It is not the Bruges of this century or that, it is not the Bruges of Baldwyn or of Charles the Bold, it is the Bruges that has been wrought by the genius of ages, the Bruges that belongs to all who love beauty. A personality rather than monuments of architecture or tomes of history is this water-girt city with her towering churches and her Belfry.





The Godshuis de Meulenaere

## CHAPTER IV

### THE BÉGUINAGE, THE HÔPITAL ST. JEAN, & THE ANCIENT ALMS-HOUSES

IT is customary to think of Bruges as having nothing really beautiful and peculiarly her own that was produced after the end of the fifteenth century, for with her fortunes shattered and her grandeur gone it seems at first sight as though there must have been an end to her growth. Had it not been for the power of the Church such would probably have been the case, and the city would have quickly dwindled, a fate which has overtaken many erstwhile flourishing towns of Flanders.

In the sixteenth century Bruges was of little importance politically, and by the removal of her trade to Antwerp she had lost her sources of material wealth. She was deserted by the throng of foreign merchants, and their magnificent palaces, whose towers had distinguished the city, were left to crumble or were indeed pulled down. Towards the end of the century religious persecution set in under Philip II., and it would be difficult to overestimate the havoc wrought by the Calvinists. The unsettled condition of Flanders had rendered unsafe the outlying districts, at that time rich in monasteries, and as a consequence the religious orders sought refuge within the walls of Bruges, which since 1560 had been an episcopal see. Here they established themselves, and the early seventeenth century saw a renewed building activity arise owing to the need for restoring or rebuilding certain of the numerous churches and for providing for the accommodation of monks, friars, and nuns.

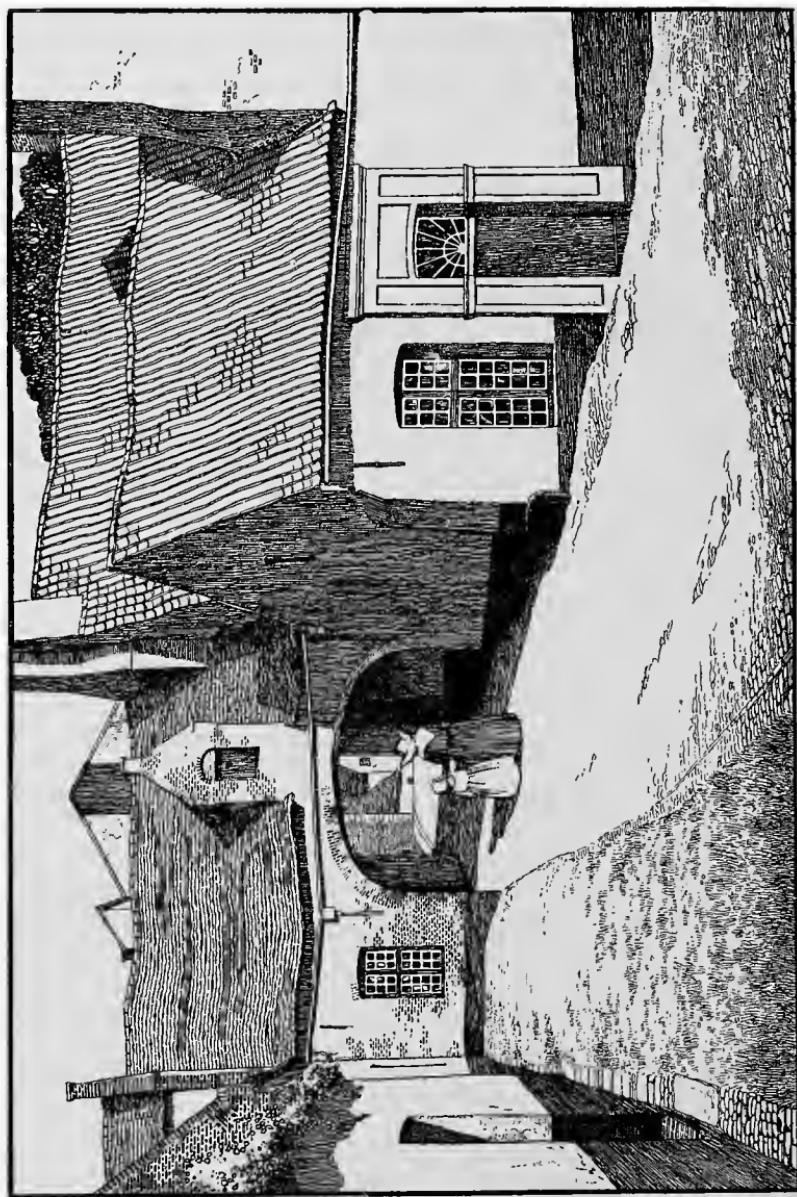
There were also in Bruges at this time many lay families of wealth and position (their immigration dating from the end of the fifteenth or the beginning of the sixteenth century),<sup>1</sup> and they built and endowed a large number of almshouses, the *gods-huizen* which are to-day one of the most delightful features of the city, characteristic in their architecture

<sup>1</sup> *The Story of Bruges.* By Ernest Gilliat-Smith (Mediæval Towns Series).



In the Béguinage, looking towards Notre Dame

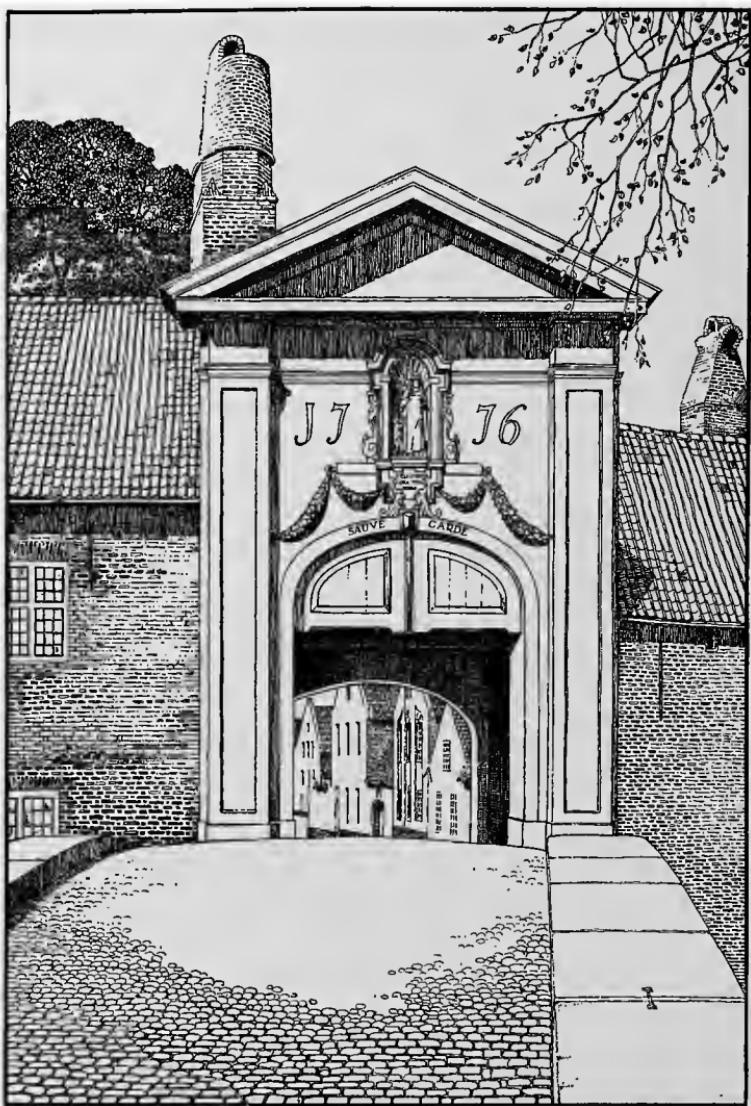
and reminiscent in their aims of that large-heartedness, that love of home and respect for family which have distinguished the Flemish race throughout its history. Thus many of these *godshuizen* owe their origin to the generosity of Bruegans of the seventeenth century : others of earlier foundation were rebuilt at this period. For the most part they consist of a number of small houses arranged compactly and uniformly around an open court, which more often than not is shut off from the street by a high wall, the only access being through a doorway which sometimes gives a fair intimation of what may be expected the other side. Others face the street, the court being behind the front block, but in each case



In the Béguinage

a chapel forms an integral part of the scheme. The irregular shape of the small dwellings, the warm colour, and the quiet reigning within the courtyard, rest the mind and gladden the eye. Although a few only of the almshouses are described or illustrated in this book, they were a large number in all, and it is not without interest to know to which centuries they chiefly owed their foundation, a question which has been thoroughly worked out by Canon Duclos. He says<sup>1</sup> that in the fourteenth century seven *godshuizen* were founded in Bruges, in the fifteenth ten, in the sixteenth seven, in the seventeenth seventeen, and in the eighteenth ten. He also tells us that in 1746 fifteen only of the small almshouses were left, but that in 1894 there were twenty-one, several of ancient foundation having been rebuilt. Of these houses, which are for the most part for the old, some are for men, some for women, and some for married couples. Every calling seems to have made provision for the old age of its workers, and always their liberty is respected: they are free to come and go. Those still fit for work eke out the small endowment that comes to them with their little dwellings: those who have sons or daughters are helped by them. Besides adding to the interest of a walk through the city, these *godshuizen* give a pleasant sidelight on the character of Brugeans.

<sup>1</sup> *Bruges : Histoires et Souvenirs.* Ad. Duclos. (Bruges, 1910.)



Entrance to the Béguinage from the Bridge over the Minnewater

Respect for freedom, which distinguishes the menage of the *godshuizen*, is also apparent in certain of the religious establishments, notably that of the Béguines of Flanders. Dating apparently from the end of the twelfth century, the Béguines take their name from their founder, Lambert de Beghe. He founded at Liège an institution for widows and single women who wished to consecrate their lives to God. This institution, which was called a 'Béguinage,' consisted of a collection of small houses with a chapel in the centre, the entire precincts being enclosed by a wall. These women were under no obligation to give up their property, and the only vows required of them were those of chastity and obedience to the Sister Superior (*Groot Juffrouw*) during their residence in the Béguinage. In each house lived one or two Béguines : each was allowed to keep a servant or to have her mother or a friend living with her. Their work was various : teaching the young, caring for the poor, tending the sick, sewing, and lace-making. Such arrangements are carried out in the Béguinage of Bruges, the hoped-for goal of many a working woman to-day.

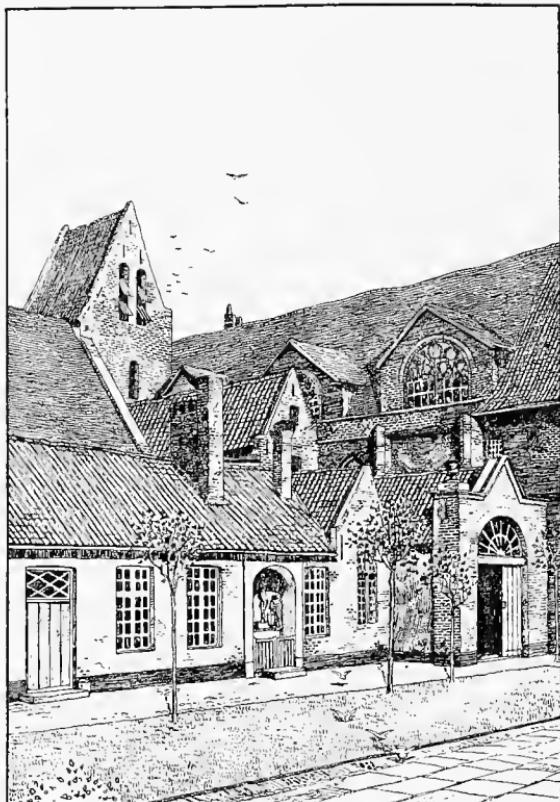
An impression of the charm of this enclosure and of the enviable lot of its inhabitants is given by the late Georges Rodenbach in his novel *Bruges-la-Morte*. Fain would one loiter in the quiet of this place—a quiet distinguishable from the sleepy rest-

fulness pervading the old Flemish city. Very beautiful, very splendid was Bruges in the fifteenth century, but now when the glory of the city is dead and much of its magnificence lost, here in the Béguinage the qualities that dazzle the senses have given place to the loveliness that penetrates the spirit, and inevitable seems the goodness of those whose home is here. The soft green turf, the tall trees, the red-roofed, white-washed houses with their high gables, their green window-frames and picturesque chimneys, the gliding nuns, are parts of a picture perfect in its entirety.

The Béguinage of Bruges was founded in the thirteenth century by Jeanne of Constantinople, Countess of Flanders (1205–1244), but with the exception of the doorway to the church, which is of that period, very little now to be seen is of earlier date than the beginning of the seventeenth century. Situated in the south-west corner of the city, the approach from the Rue de la Vigne lies over a bridge which spans the Minnewater and through a gateway upon which the date 1776 may be read. A large irregular-shaped expanse, grass-grown and wooded with tall elms, fewer in number than in days past, for winter storms have singled out their victims, constitutes the *pleasaunce*. At the north end of this stands the church of St. Elizabeth, which, although of early foundation, was for the most part rebuilt in

1605. A cobbled way leads from the gateway round the whole enclosure, and jutting on it stand the low dwellings of the Béguines : one on the eastern side, larger and more pretentious than the others and with chapel attached, is the house of the Sister Superior. Here again it may be seen how light a hand the Renaissance laid on the architecture of Bruges. With the exception of the entrance gateway, which is classic in composition, the Béguinage is remote from the ‘grand manner.’ Simplicity is its keynote, just as simplicity was a leading factor in charity and religion among the Flemings.

Rich in history and mellow with a warmer beauty than most of the buildings now standing in Bruges, the Hôpital St. Jean arrests the eye of the passers-by, and in its close contiguity with the church of Notre Dame and the lordly home of Gruuthuse, completes one of the most striking groups of brick-work that the city has to offer. But the part facing Notre Dame and that giving on to the water are almost all that is left of the original building ; the rest of the large rambling structure having been restored or rebuilt. Like many another establishment in Flanders which had mercy for its aim, the Hôpital St. Jean owes its foundation to Jeanne of Constantinople, Countess of Flanders. Built for sick persons of both sexes, it still serves that purpose, and is now held by the Augustinian Sisters, most of whom



A Corner of the Hôpital St. Jean

have been trained as hospital nurses. The chapel dates from 1475 and is probably the work of Vincent de Roode, master-mason of the Hospital. The courtyard is charming and peaceful, and the interior of the Hospital has much to attract, with its long white-

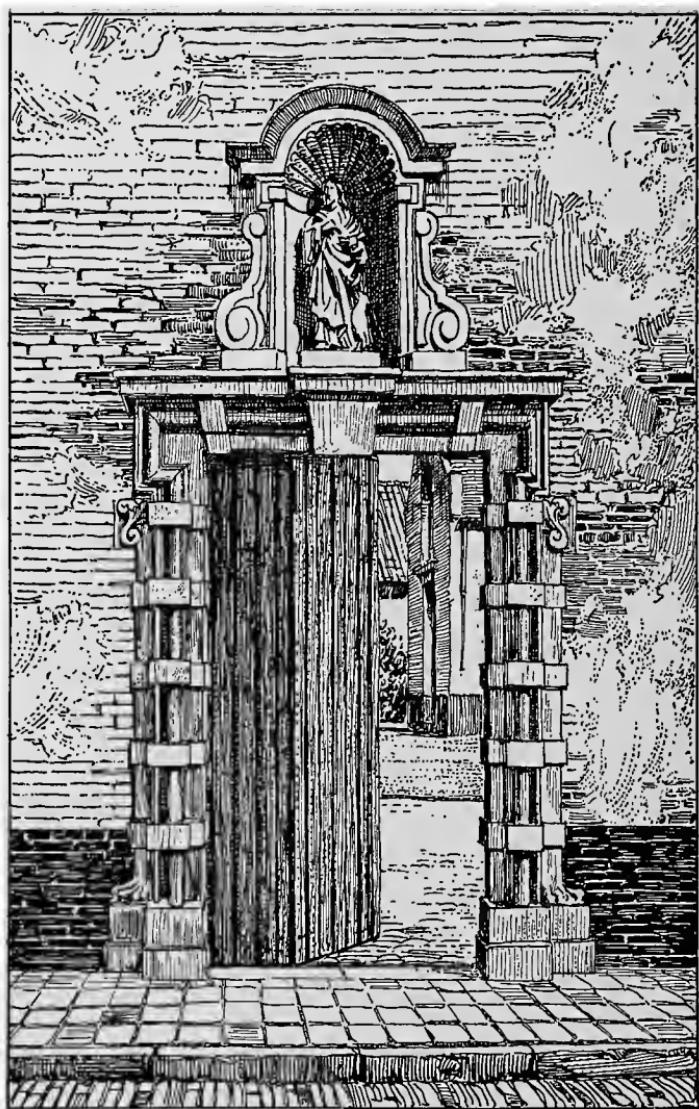
washed corridors, cool and silent, and its handsome old oak furniture. But to-day the Hôpital St. Jean is most widely known as the home of some of Memlinc's finest paintings. The great painter, who was born about the year 1430, came to live in Bruges in 1471. Here he married and here in August 1494

he died. Thus when Bruges was alive with gaiety, the seat of "the richest court of the richest sovereign in Europe"—Philip the Good—Memlinc plied his art within her walls.

Not the least memorable of this Queen of Cities' claims to distinction is the knowledge that at Bruges were executed the finest works of such men as Colard Mansion, William Caxton, and Hans Memlinc. It is not, however, the pride of cities nor the revelry of courts that is brought to mind by Memlinc's paintings now to



Rue de St. Esprit, with the Hôpital St. Jean  
in the distance



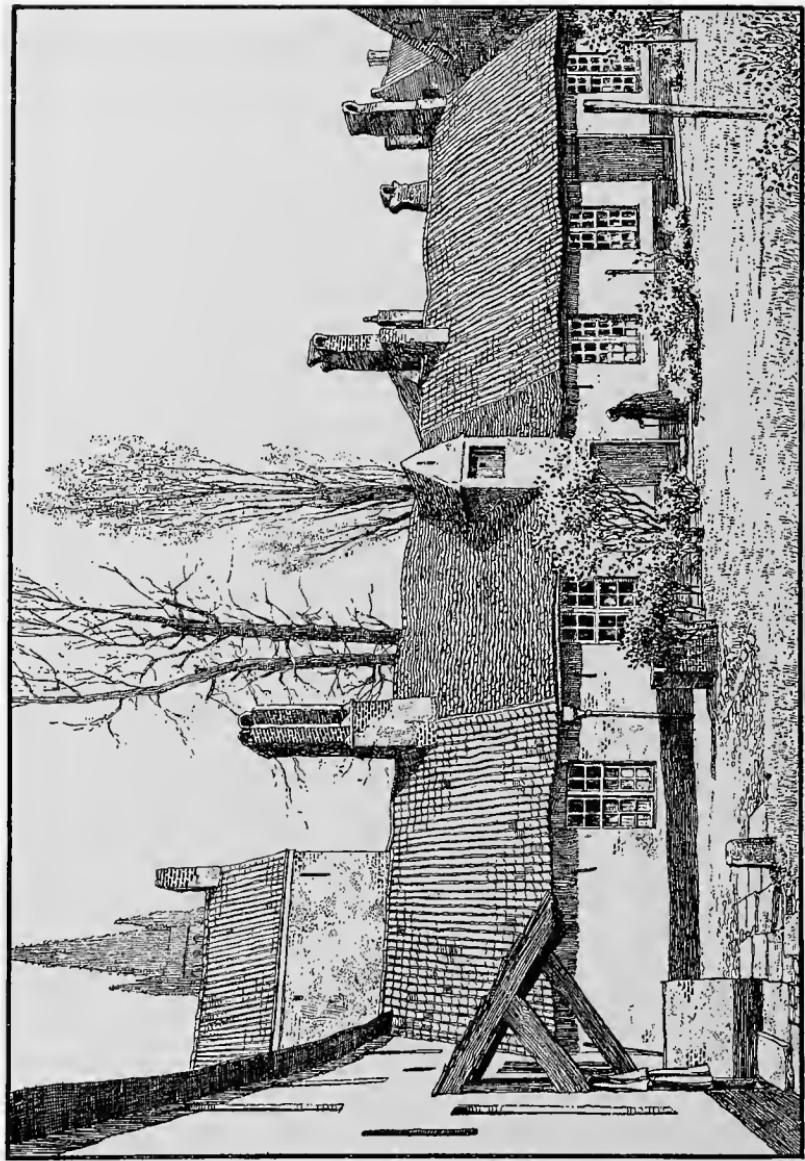
Doorway to the Godshuis Herstberghe

be seen in the chapter house of the Hôpital St. Jean. It is the nobility of his art, the poetry of his theme. Wonderful as is his technique and glorious his colour, the soul is his quest, and what he makes his own he idealises. The story that Memlinc came sick to the Hôpital St. Jean and, being penniless, gave his work in exchange for the care he received, has no claim on our credulity other than its fitness. It matters little whether it be truth or legend: the truth that matters is that the paintings are there and in them is expressed the spirit of Bruges.

In the Rue Ste. Catherine a beautiful doorway surmounted by a niche, in which is a statue of the Good Shepherd, gives access to the Godshuis Herstberghe, whose gabled houses face the street.

A typical example of the disposition of a Flemish godshuis is the Roomsche Couvent, elusive in its retirement though only a stone's-throw from the Rue Ste. Catherine. It was founded in 1377, but like many others was rebuilt, probably in the seventeenth century. The inner court, lined on two sides with small dwellings for women, contains a curious pump and a bell. The charm of this courtyard with its quaint houses and warm coloured roofs and chimneys is enhanced by the tall trees beyond, from amongst which the spire of Notre Dame rises.

From a narrow street—the Rue Corroyeur en Noir—not far from the Park, a doorway leads into

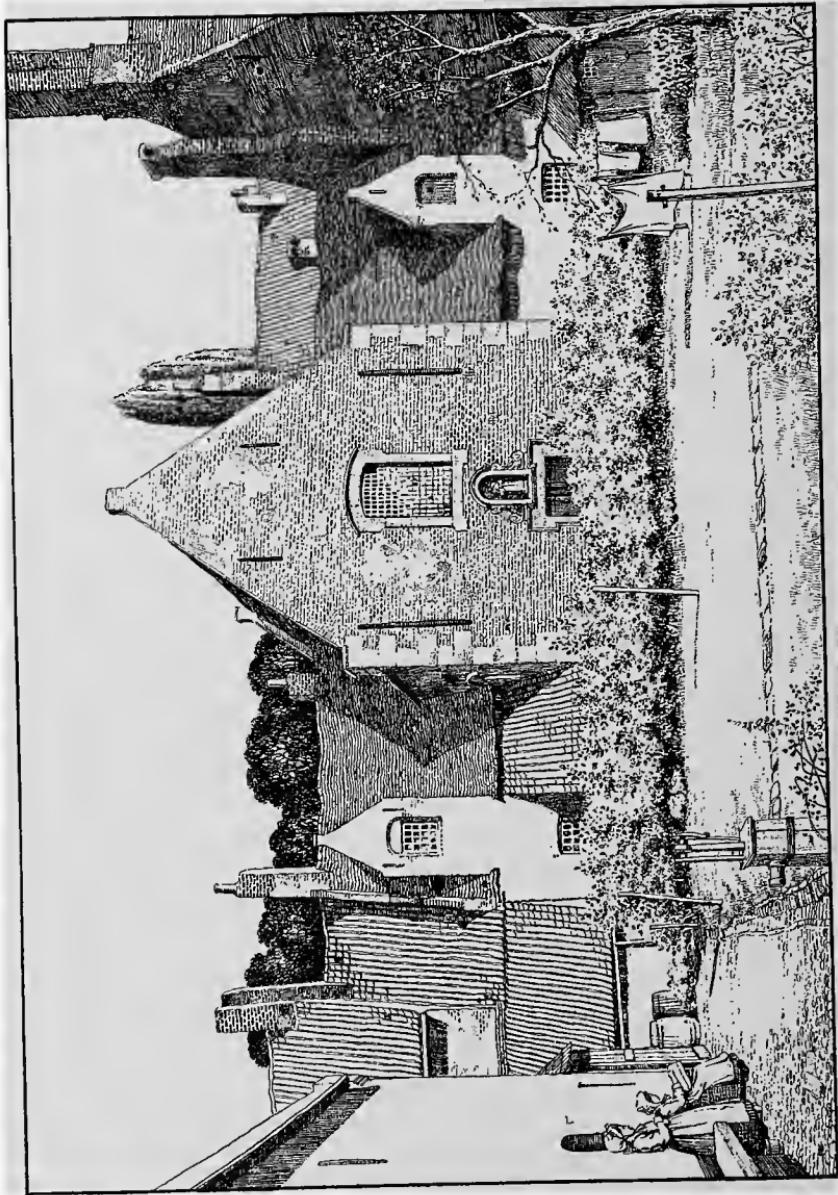


The Roonsch Couvent

the courtyard of the Godshuis de Comte de Fontaine. This almshouse was founded in 1636 for twelve wounded soldiers, or, failing them, twelve poor families, by General Paul Bernard, Comte de Fontaine. He is something of a hero in the history of Bruges, and to his valour the city owed deliverance from a siege during the wars of France and the United Provinces against the Catholics of the Low Countries. Bossuet records how Condé was thrice repulsed by the Comte de Fontaine, whose physical infirmities were such that he had to be carried on to the field of battle in his chair.<sup>1</sup> The exterior of this almshouse as seen from the court has altered little—save for the mellowness brought by time—since it was built, and it retains its characteristic features unspoiled, colour and form together giving a desirable picture. The peace of another age pervades the place, and it is with regret that the bright courtyard backed by white-washed houses and dominated by the central gable-end of the chapel seen in the sketch, is exchanged for the narrow cobbled street. The Comte de Fontaine was *Grand Bailli* of Bruges and of the Franc. Himself fighting to the end, he had provided for others the possibility of an evening of life free from strife and care.

Of the smaller almshouses perhaps the most satisfactory from the artist's point of view—by no

<sup>1</sup>Bruges: *Histoires et Souvenirs.* Ad. Duclos.



Godshuis de Comte de Fontaine

means from the hygienist's—is the Godshuis de Meulenaere, situated in the Rue Neuve de Gand and founded in 1613 by Jeanne de Meulenaere, for twenty-four poor women. Most of the old people living here to-day are engaged in lace-making. Through the open doorway of more than one tiny dwelling a quaint figure in check dress and white cap can be seen at her work, and the click of her bobbin sounds cheerfully across the quiet courtyard. Free to come and free to go, these women can enjoy a peaceful liberty and know neither the horror of want nor the fret of restriction. Many a poor old woman has found a home here, the uneventfulness of her days marked by the visits of her children and grandchildren; and others to whom life has brought neither love nor children, but much of sacrifice, here find a quiet content. And good it is to know that the lift from sordidness given to so many poor women of Bruges to-day is owing to a woman rich in this world's goods in an earlier age. A beautiful doorway in a nicely shaped brick gable gives access to this almshouse : it is surmounted by a stone niche in which stands a figure of the Madonna. These doorways were general. Indeed, in the seventeenth century and earlier, it must have been a rarity to find a doorway that was not surmounted by a niche in which stood a sculptured figure of the Virgin Mary, the Good Shepherd, or some patron saint. A good



Doorway with Niche in the Béguinage Marécage, for seven daughters or widows left without means. It was restored in 1634 by Florius Van Eechoute, and the doorway is of that date.

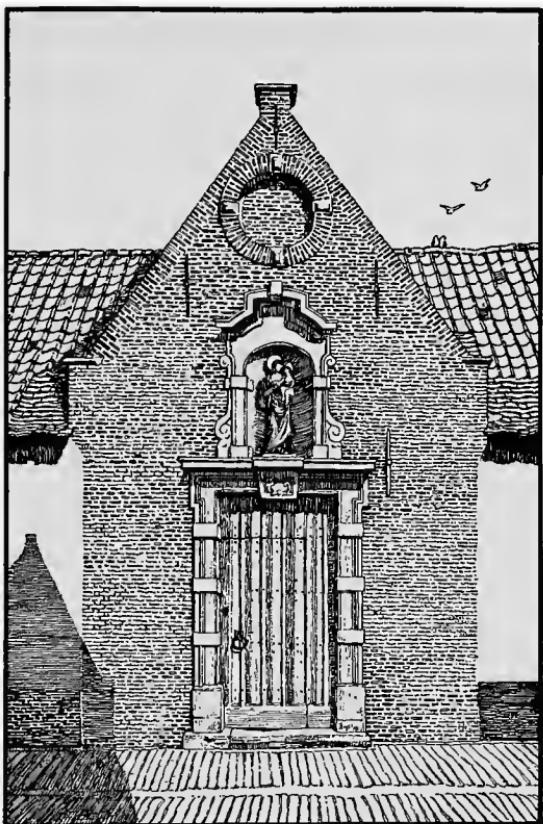
Situated in the Rue des Baudets is the Hospice St. Josse, distinguished by the restful lines of its façade and the colour of its yellow-washed walls and brown roof. The exterior, indeed, holds out a promise

number stand to-day, and some complete, as may be seen from those illustrated in this chapter, but others have been less fortunate, and many niches with their delicate shell heads are empty now.

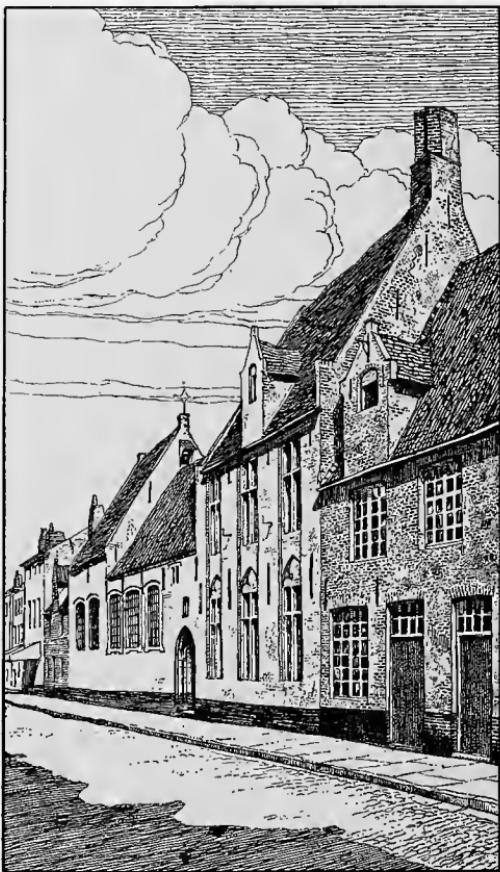
A doorway in good preservation is that in the Rue Marécage belonging to the Hospice Goderyx, a godshuis founded in 1383 by Dame Margaret Rejn, the widow of M. Gerard Gode-

in striking contrast to the welcome awaiting the would-be enterer. It was founded in 1575 by Josse Lambrecht, a Canon of St. Donatian's, for poor old people, twelve men and one woman. Lambrecht rebuilt the chapel, and it contains a monument to his memory.

Bruges of the seventeenth century has many claims on our admiration. Rich in memories of splendour and deeds of valour, fresh from the horror of war, of persecution and desecration perpetrated in the name of religion, the city could yet raise her head. The early years of the century were a rallying time in Bruges : then,



Entrance to the Godshuis de Meulenaere



The Hospice St. Josse

through the horrors Bruges suffered under the rule of the French Republic,—when some of her finest buildings fell at the hands of the Revolutionists, when many of her towers were laid low and her Cathedral razed to the ground,—the *godshuizen* were spared.

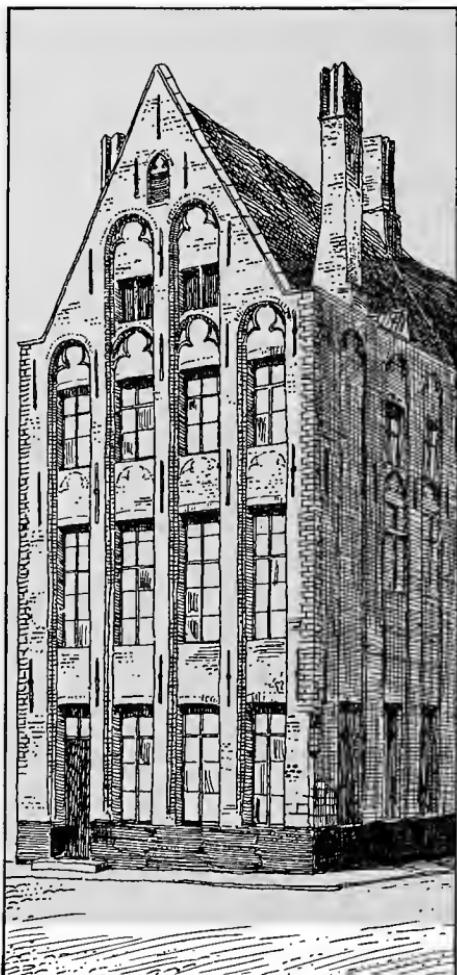
as now, it was the city of the friar and the nun ; then, as now, the Church held the people. No longer was the merchant the ruling power or commerce the mainspring of the community. Care for the old and the poor was a force ; the spirit of Christ lived in Bruges. The very buildings that gave a comeliness to the city were the result of the love for God and neighbour. And

## CHAPTER V

### THE FAÇADES OF BRUGES

**I**N considering the domestic architecture of Bruges, it must be borne in mind that it concerns a type of town dwelling which differs in many essentials from the less restricted type usually met with in the open country. Bruges being, in the height of its fame, a city of narrow streets and densely packed houses, it follows that, except in the case of the great merchant princes, whose palaces have for the most part disappeared, the city dweller had to be content with a comparatively narrow plot of ground, which, in spite of the fact that it may have been of considerable depth, presented to the street a front averaging no more than some twenty to thirty feet in width. Hence it comes about that, as regards external design, the study of the domestic architecture of Bruges becomes a question of the form, treatment, and details of the principal façade.

To what extent Bruges may originally have been a city of timber-built houses it is now difficult to say, although many a timber front figures in the old paintings which have been handed down from pre-Renaissance times. From the time of her awakening and rise to prosperity, Bruges has unquestionably



House in the Place St. Jean

another in attributing the designs of the first brick façades to the direct influence of their timber fore-runners. Mediæval builders were too conscious of

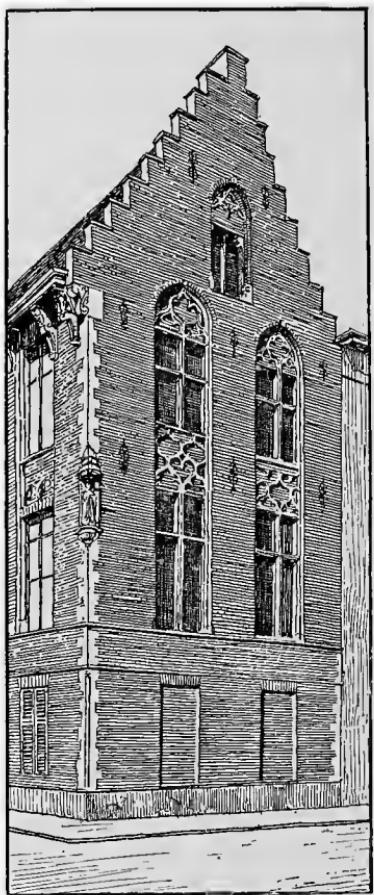
been a city of brick and stone. It is still possible to find more than one timber front which has withstood the ravages of time and—less successfully—the hand of the restorer, but these differ in no essentials from the far more elaborate fronts to be found in other parts of Belgium and France, and would not be worthy of notice at all were it not that they are so rare here as to arrest the attention. Writers seem to have laid undue stress upon these earlier timber houses, and to have vied with one

the properties and limitations of their materials to attempt to copy in any such meretricious manner, and the earliest brick façades extant show a handling of the material and a grasp of its possibilities in design which will not allow of any such misinterpretation being put upon their work.

Nowhere probably within such a small area can the possibilities of brick building be better studied than in Bruges, and although changes in ideal were constantly bringing about different types of design and variations in detail, rarely did the designs fall short of a high standard, and never did they excel in purity of line and grandeur of mass the works of the builders who first used brick in the early days of the fifteenth century. It is difficult and unprofitable to attempt to fix definite dates corresponding to the marked changes in design, but it is quite possible to group the various façades into some four or five types such as has been skilfully done by writers on Bruges,<sup>1</sup> and when viewed in this light the confusion resulting from the contemplation of so large a number of dwellings entirely disappears.

The first type is marked by a strong preponderance of vertical lines, the windows being disposed in slightly recessed bays, which are continued the full height of the façade without interruption from string-courses or other horizontal members, and

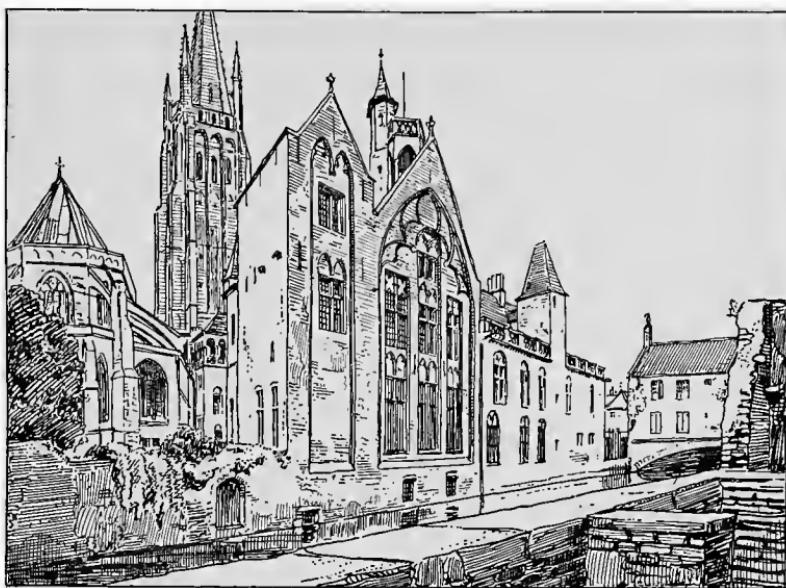
<sup>1</sup> *L'art des façades à Bruges.* Ad. Duclos.



House at the Corner of Rue de l'Hydromel and the Rue des Ronces

finished at the top with plainly moulded semicircular or pointed arches, the heads being invariably filled with Gothic tracery in cut brick. Stately brick façades designed on this motif are seen again and again in such fronts as that of the Hôtel Bouchoute in the Grand' Place (p. 34), the 'Black House,' Rue Tonneliers (p. 74), in the Place St. Jean (p. 108), and in many fragments, such as that of the Halle de Paris, most of which date from about 1480, and it is noteworthy that when the house at the corner of the Rue de l'Hydromel was built as late as 1629, the type which had produced so much that is admirable was still more or less in favour.

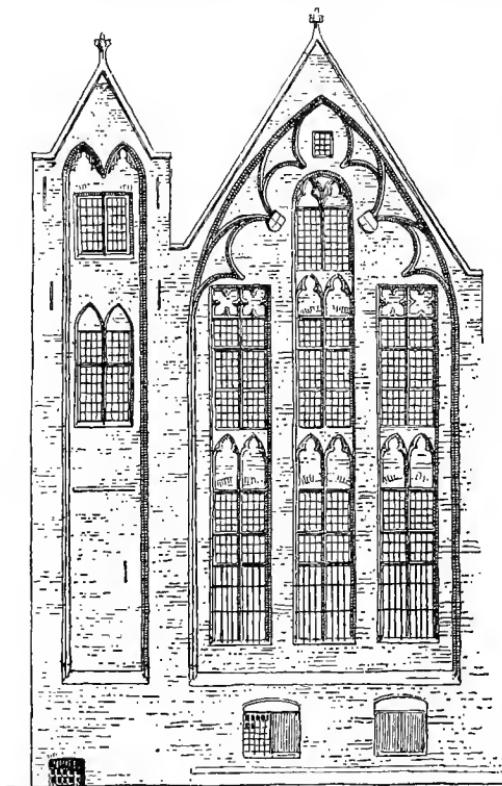
But two hundred years before this the eastern façade of the Hôtel Gruuthuuse had been set up, rising sheer out of the waters of the Reie, and gaining in effect thereby.



The Gruuthuse and Notre Dame from the East

Here, as became the status of the owner and magnificence of the dwelling, a lighter and more elegant rendering was made possible by the steep gables, and the large enclosing arch foliated in cut brick, filling the larger gable, and very similar to the south transept gable of the church of St. Sauveur, is one of the most precious pieces of early fifteenth century craftsmanship that has survived. In all of these the space above the relieving arch to the window and beneath the sill of the window above, as well as the arched heads at the summit, are filled with brick tracery,

and the variety in the form of the traceries points to the unlimited resources of the craftsman.



Part of the Eastern Façade of the  
Hôtel Gruuthuuse

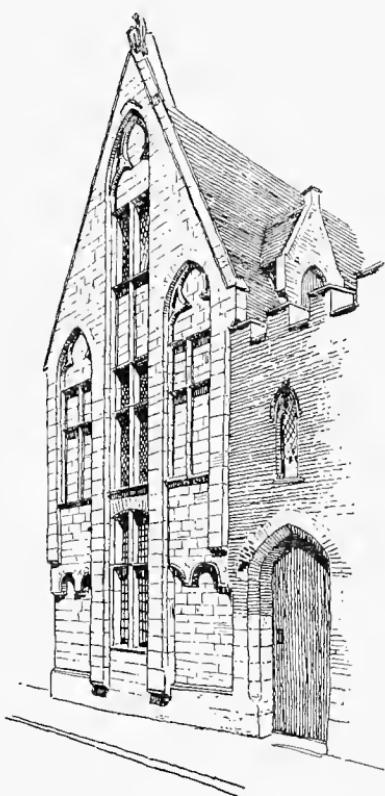
If timber fronts are rarely seen in the streets of Bruges to-day, stone façades are not much less scarce. This is hardly to be wondered at, seeing that good building stone had necessarily to be brought some distance, and although water carriage made this no serious undertaking, when it was a question of erecting an important public building, it was

not the custom of mediæval builders to use an imported material for their everyday work when another which met all their needs was to be had near at hand. And so Bruges has sprung up a brick city,

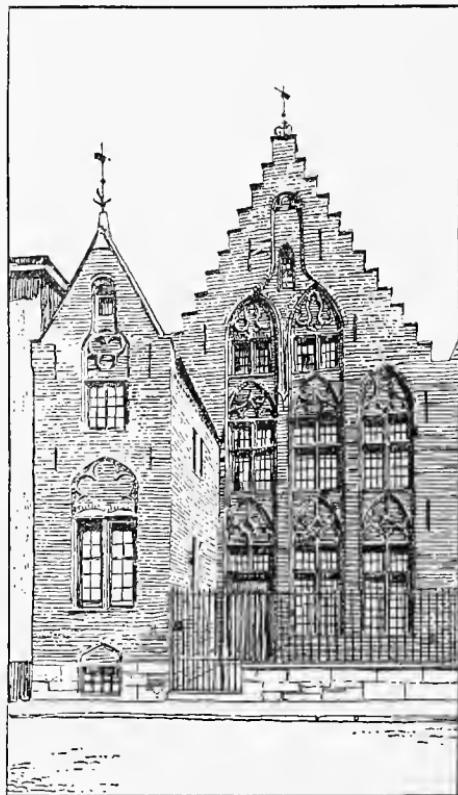
## SCARCITY OF STONE FAÇADES 113

and the small town house in stone needs seeking. Even the house of Jean Vasquez, No. 40 Rue d'Argent,—probably the best stone façade still intact, and dating from about 1470,—is little more than a frontispiece, for the rest of the house surrounding a little courtyard is built of brick. Making allowance for the difference in material and the smallness of the scale, this façade and the other stone ones, such as that of the Grand Tonlieu in the Place Van Eyck, appear to be designed on lines similar to the first type of brick façade already described.

Not content with this logical and beautifully simple manner of design, the Bruges builders made a departure from it on what cannot be said to be sound lines, and they reared for a while tall and spacious façades, which are more remarkable for their ingenuity and technical skill in construction



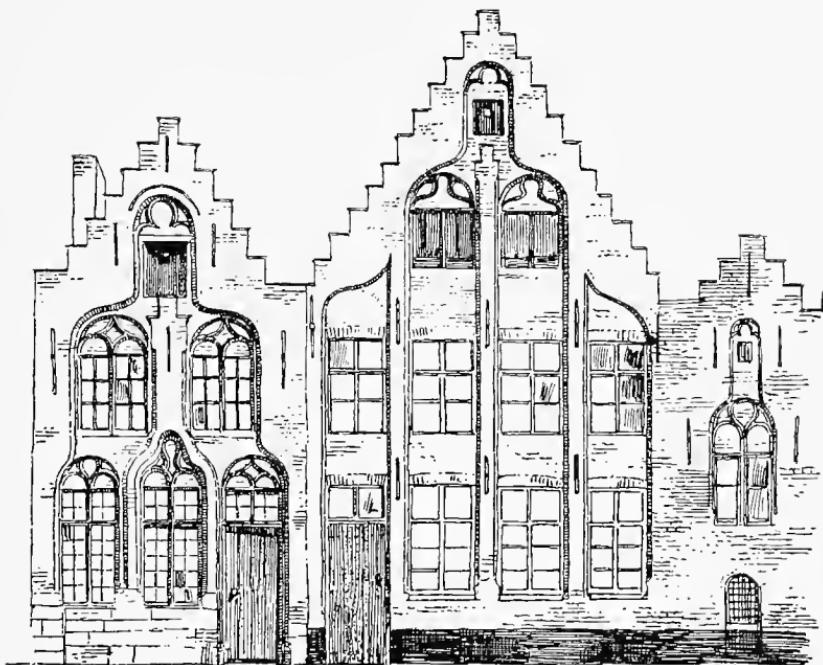
Stone Façade, No. 40 Rue  
d'Argent



No. 28 Rue du Marécage

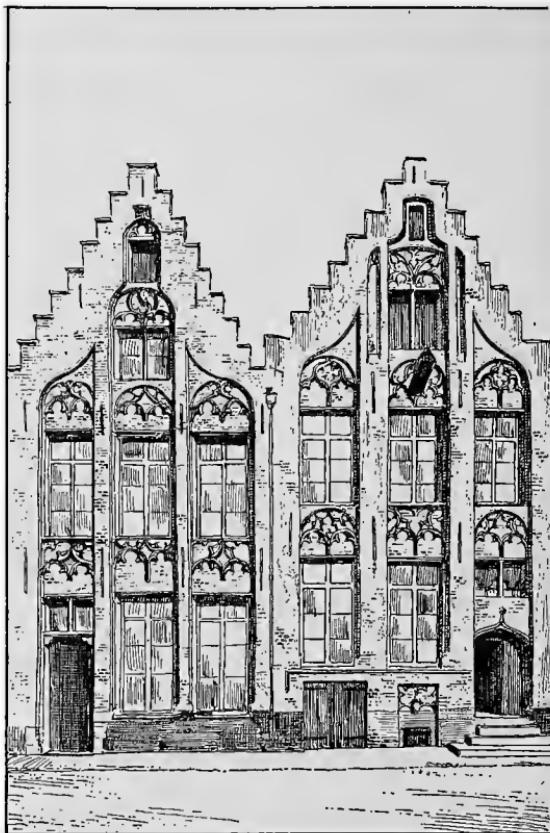
plane conform to the outline of the windows on the different floors, including the single opening in the centre of the steep gable, with the result that instead of a strong constructional line, a weak straggling one was invariably produced. On a small scale this defect was occasionally minimised, as in No. 28 Rue du Marécage, where only the two central windows

than for any feeling of satisfaction they arouse in the mind of the beholder. In this second type, the façade is arranged in two planes, the whole of the central part containing the windows being recessed. Such a disposition is not in itself objectionable, and in fact was used with excellent result in some of the finest examples of the first type; but its weakness was brought about by the desire to make the outer



Nos. 3 and 5 Rue Marché au Fil

are thus enclosed, but it was more usual to enclose all the windows, as in No. 3 Rue Marché au Fil. The constructional sense here cannot be said to be satisfied, for although there may be a certain pleasing freedom of line and disposition of masses, it is not apparent how the weak lines of the corbelling suffice to carry the load put upon it, and it is obvious that if the lower or recessed parts are thick enough for structural purposes, the upper or projecting parts of the walling are unnecessarily thick.



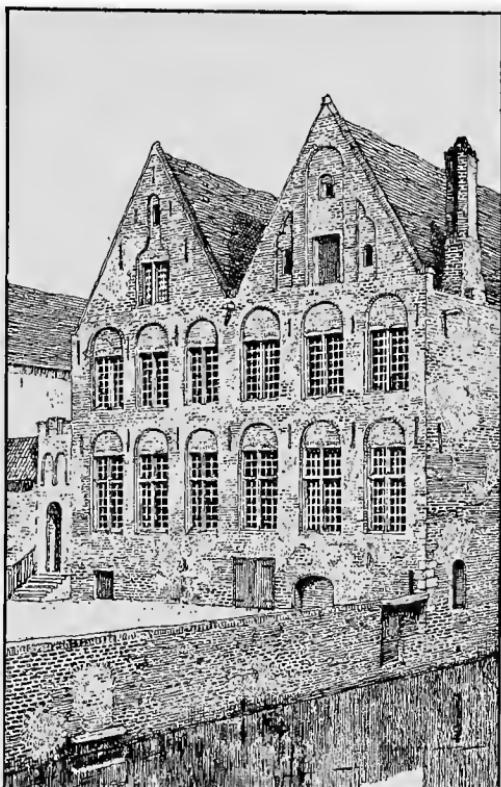
Nos. 5 and 7 Rue Pourbus

Many varieties of this treatment are met with built during the century and a quarter or so from the year 1500. They are all more or less weak, and give the unfortunate impression that part of one design has been superimposed in front of another design. This is particularly noticeable in

one gable at the rear of the Palais du Franc. This type of façade seems to be peculiar to Bruges, and, with the exception of a solitary instance at Tournai, nothing quite similar is to be found in the neighbouring towns.

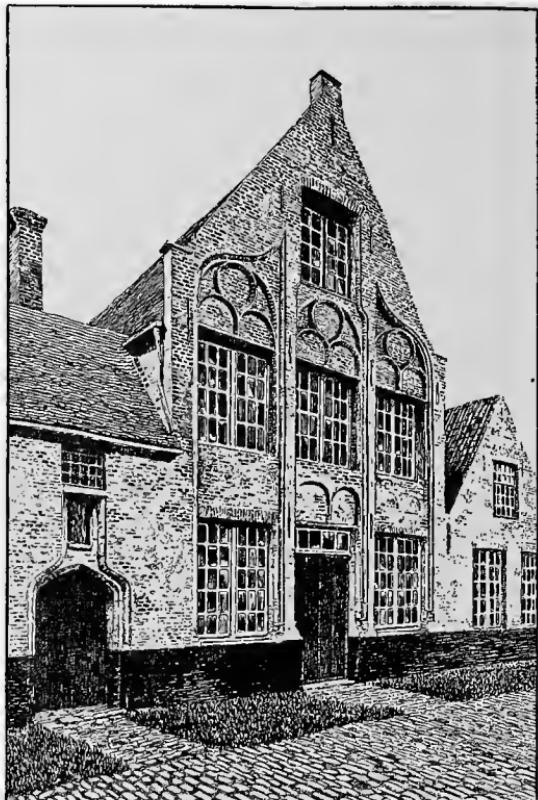
One turns with delight to the consideration of

the third type, to which the streets of Bruges owe much of their fascination. This type probably had quite early beginnings, though it does not appear to have been developed till well into the sixteenth century. The principle of recessing in planes, which was the secret of the success of the brick building of that time in England as much as in



House at the Corner of the Rue Est de Ghistelles by the Pont des Augustins

Belgium, is again the keynote of the design ; but the vertical recessed bays in which the windows are situated are kept distinct from one another, and while the central one rises into the gable, the outer ones are finished with shaped heads which lead the eye gently to the centre of the composition, the two sides exactly balancing one another. The essentials



Façade in the Béguinage

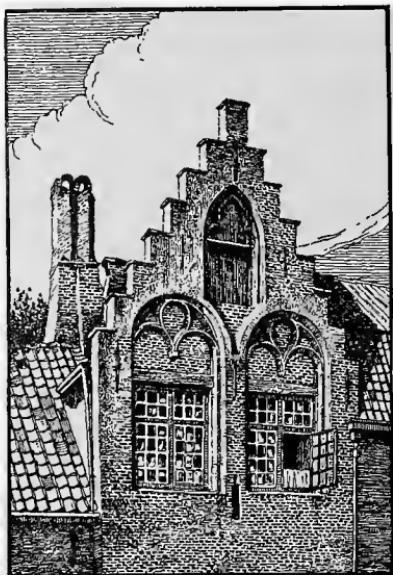
of this type are seen in their simplest form at the corner of the Rue Est de Ghistelles by the Pont des Augustins, in a charming gable of early date, in which the brick recesses have a roll moulding instead of the usual arris, and little capitals and bases (now much weather-worn) are worked on the rolls. Con-

siderably later, and on a larger scale, are the façades of Nos. 5 and 7 Rue Pourbus (p. 116), in which there are no conflicting elements in the design, and the whole is brought into unity by the symmetrical treatment of the heads of the recesses, which lead up gracefully to the centre and find their highest point there. Many others, at Damme as well as at

Bruges, might be mentioned ; but a number have been altered or destroyed, which is all the more to be deplored as this is probably the most rational of the local types of façade-design owing nothing to Renaissance feeling or detail.

Strong and healthy as were mediæval traditions in Bruges, they were not able to withstand the flood of Renaissance thought which was permeating not only Belgium but the whole of Europe in the sixteenth century. Bruges could not be left behind : she was brought too much in contact with life and progress. Her merchant princes came from all parts and travelled in many countries ; her artists knew well the changes which the new régime were bringing about in the arts, and were not by any means slow to realise that a new world was opening up before them. First the painters and sculptors, and eventually the architects, began to work in the 'new manner,' and, side by side with buildings conceived on the old lines, others began to spring up, which, like the *Ancien Greffe*, show that alluring combination of Gothic structure and Renaissance detail whence resulted in every country, save Italy, a transitional phase which charms by its very imperfections and human appeal.

The strong vertical lines, the pointed arch, the traceried tympanum and the stepped gable, to which Bruges had so long been accustomed, scarce

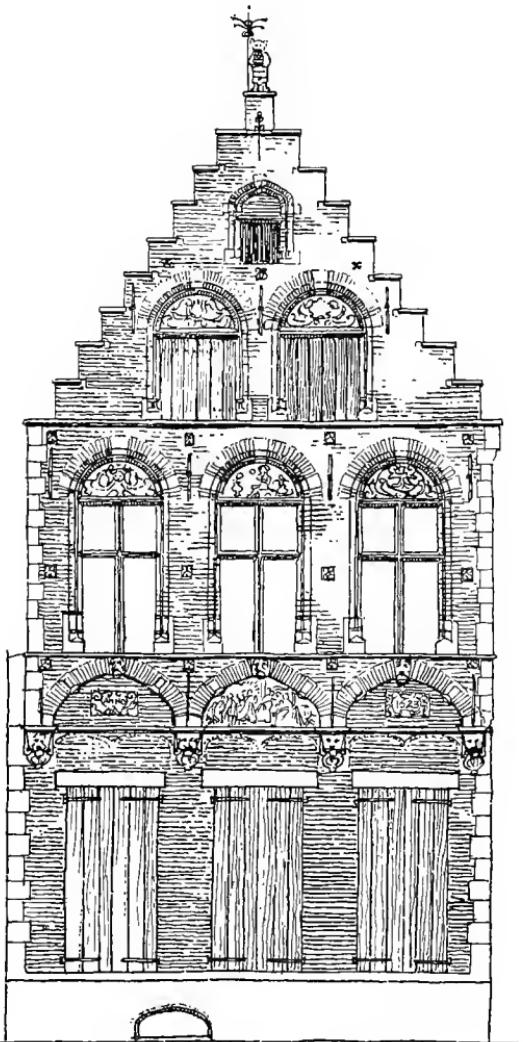


Gable in the Rue Neuve de Gand

accorded with these new ideas : yet it was hardly to be expected that her builders could hastily throw all these aside. They went about their new task in a perfectly consistent manner, feeling their way and gradually arriving at something as distinctively classic as their earlier work had been distinctively mediæval. The lofty façade with the Flemish or crow-step

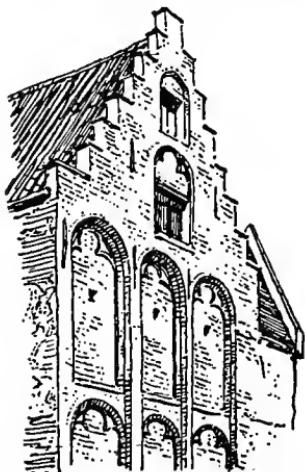
gable was a cherished possession and could not be lightly given up, and although the shaped stone gable was permissible in a public building in the first years of the sixteenth century, and although many a stately dwelling thoroughly Renaissance in character had been set up by that time, such as the Hôtel des Biscayens—of which nothing is left—the street façade was affected but slowly, and the most perfect example of the first phase of the Renaissance house front is probably to be found in the house in the Rue du Fil (p. 121), which bears the date 1628. A comparison of this with the houses in Rue Pourbus

admirably illustrates the change which had come about in the eventful interval ; the general outline is practically the same, but the detail is very different. The vertical division into bays has given way to a horizontal division by means of string-courses into storeys, the traceried tympanum has been replaced by one strongly enclosed by the mouldings



Façade to No. 7 Rue du Fil

of a semicircular arch and filled with sculpture, while the change of plane is obtained by corbelling formed



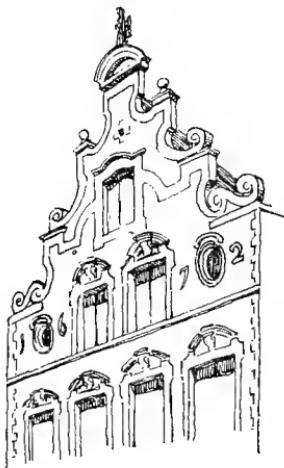
Gable from the Halle de Paris.  
Fifteenth century type

of massively carved stone corbels instead of by recessing in the brick. The lower storey of this particular façade, which measures 22 feet in width, has been spoiled by the insertion of windows very different in character from the original ones, but the upper part is in excellent preservation and the sculptured tympana and cartouches are thoroughly good of their kind.

The mediæval builders

threw over each window opening an arch which was constructive inasmuch as it relieved the lintel, and by recessing the window head they were enabled to introduce much beautiful detail in their brick traceries, but with the coming of the Renaissance a flatter treatment was sought, and relieving arches with keystones began to be constructed flush with the main wall face, and the tympanum, as likely as not, was disregarded altogether. Examples of this are very numerous : on the Quai Ste. Anne a good example dated 1675 may be seen, and there are several in the Rue St. Jacques, where on No. 64 the stepped gable was used as late

as 1674, although the tendency had been to abandon it by that time. Wherever the stepped gable is retained the classic conquest can hardly be said to be complete, but it was the one feature that the Bruges builders clung to more tenaciously than any other, and this is not to be wondered at, for it had so long been one of the chief elements of their façade design. Constructed in a manner peculiar to Bruges, with short lengths of moulded coping of stone in place of the brick weathering more usual in England and elsewhere, it long sufficed for all manner of needs; but in spite of this, the shaped gable was used for small fronts such as that at the angle of the Rue de L'Ane Aveugle in the first quarter of the seventeenth century, and after the middle of that century it may be said to have become the rule rather than the exception, whether outlined with the quite simple curves seen at No. 25 Rue des Pierres (1650) or with distinctly florid scroll shapes such as the "maison corporative des maçons" in the same street and in No. 25 Rue Flamande, which is dated 1672. Even when the whole front had been thus translated

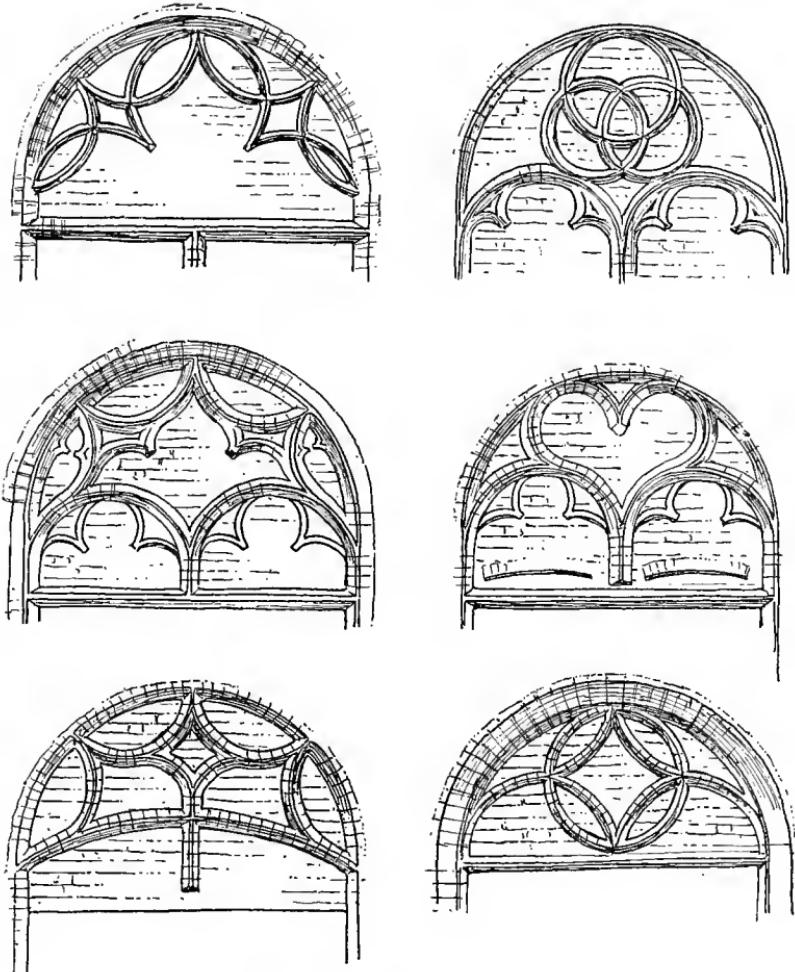


Gable from No. 25 Rue Flamande. Seventeenth century type.

into classic forms with pilasters wherever it was possible to put them, and with entablatures marking every floor level, it is interesting to notice that the gable retains the steep outline which had been handed down from the fifteenth century, and to which so much of the picturesqueness, play of skyline, and variety of the streets of Bruges is attributable. After the beginning of the eighteenth century a florid type of façade was the only one in favour, with no particular claims to beauty, and all the more to be regretted if, as was probably the case, older buildings were pulled down to make room for the new. But Bruges was not the only city suffering from decadence at that period ; the spell was broken, and Bruges, like Brussels, Ghent, Ypres, and many another city, lined her streets with façades which can claim no particular distinction, and which are as well suited to one locality as to another.

#### DETAILS OF THE DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE

The secret of the interest and beauty of the architecture of Bruges lies in her craftsmen's understanding of brick as a building material. For long centuries almost despised in some countries, and looked upon as incapable of fine expression, in the Low Countries it has never been relegated to the

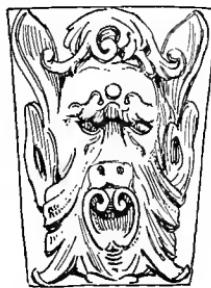
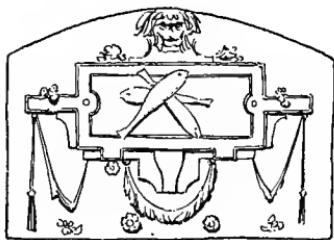


Examples of Tympana to Windows filled with Brick Traceries

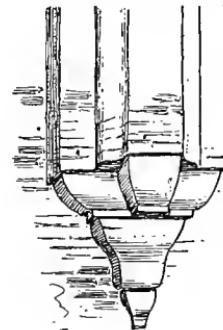
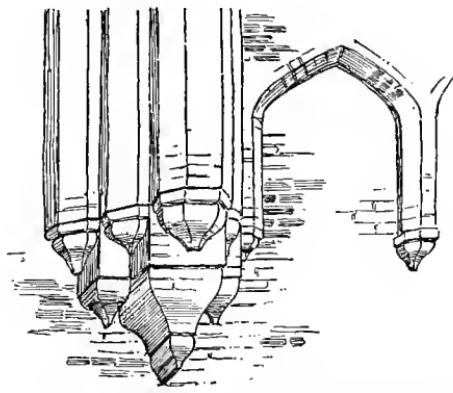
background. The home of brick architecture, just as Italy in the Middle Ages was the home of marble and France the home of stone building, the Low

Countries not only reared their own towns in this material, but they taught lessons which England, at any rate, was glad to learn. The brickwork in Bruges is many hued, ranging from a deep rich red, which time has softened and mellowed, to the lighter tints of the more modern façades, which serve to set off the intenser qualities of the original walls. With bricks thin and small in size, laid with wide joints, the Bruges builders were not afraid of a plain piece of walling, and with one exception—in the little courtyard of No. 40 Rue d'Argent—they do not appear to have used the diaper work which was so favoured in this country. Recessing and frequent change of plane gave them all they needed, and considering the large proportion of the area of most façades that was necessarily given up to windows in these town houses, they certainly could not have relied upon any better motif.

Mouldings of simple profiles were freely used, and traceries in abundance. It is useless to attempt to describe these, for a wide range of curve in tracery bar and cusp was drawn upon, and although in some instances the designs are fanciful, they are nearly always pleasing and suited to the position which they occupy. Wherever the little relieving arch occurs in the tympanum inside a larger tracery arch a space of about half an inch is artfully left beneath its soffit, which gives a dark line of shadow



KEY-STONE



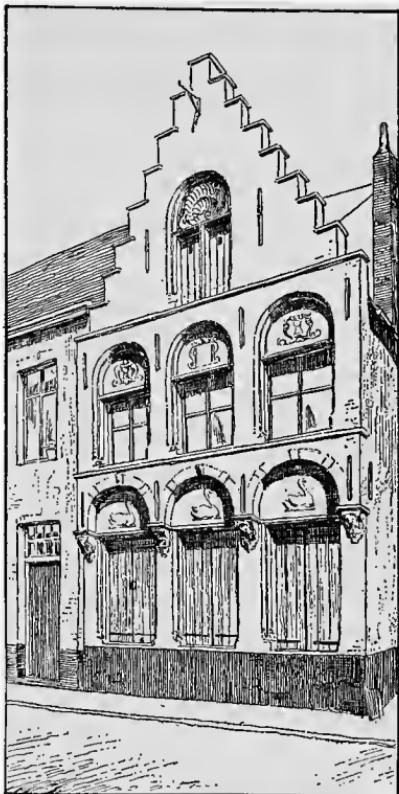
Examples of Cartouches and Corbels from Façades in Bruges

and aids the effect of the whole. This can be very clearly seen in some restored façades in the Rue Neuve, and these show, moreover, that the art of building in brick after the fifteenth century manner has not been quite lost in Bruges.

As has already been pointed out, with the advent of the Renaissance, the tympanum filled with tracery gave way to a more clearly defined one filled with sculpture. These tympana sculptured in stone or modelled in stucco are often delightful works of art in themselves, portraying all manner of legendary subjects or scenes connected with the life and industry of the city, or the one-time occupants of the house. On the front of No. 91 Rue des Pierres the subject chosen for the seven tympana was the days of the week, and on No. 28 in the same street the four seasons are depicted. Other examples are purely decorative, with, as a rule, some form of shield in the centre, supported by cupids or surrounded by ornamental devices; the whole, more often than not, slightly relieved with gilding. Other tympana may have no more than a cartouche let into the brick-work, as is the case beneath the two outer arches of No. 7 Rue du Fil, where they serve also to carry the date of erection. Although the sculptured tympanum and the cartouche are occasionally seen side by side, as in this house, the cartouche apparently preceded the bas-relief. Many will be found in

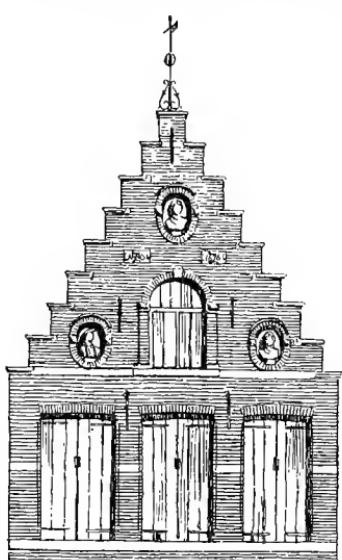
nearly every street, some of them dainty little compositions, cunningly placed and full of suggestion, while a date stone simply carved or a device suggesting the trade of the occupant has sufficed now and again. Such devices or the crest of the family, as the three fishes seen on the front of No. 42 Rue du Marécage, and the emblems of the brewer's trade on the front of No. 36 Rue des Carmes, are apt and decorative. Occasionally the tympanum is filled with a large shell ornament, as is the upper one on the house in the Rue des Carmes just mentioned, but it is not by any means as commonly used as in other towns, and the few original instances in Bruges are in danger of being 'restored' away.

Amongst other Renaissance features the rusticated quoin and the key-stone naturally play a prominent



No. 36 Rue des Carmes

part, and stone quoins, not only to the angles of the building, but to every window jamb, were in due



course introduced, with doubtful effect, when overdone as at No. 25 Rue St. Jacques. Whether the arches over door and window openings were semicircular and contained a tympanum, or whether they were segmental and flush with the wall face, they were invariably given three or four little stone voussoirs; these are no deeper than the brick arch in which they are set, but they project, and this projection gave opportunity for some detail,

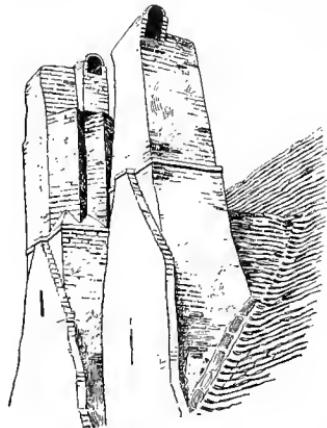
however slight. The favourite way of emphasising them was by means of a bevel which brings all the faces to a point, but they are often moulded round the edge and the point cut off. When a more ornate treatment was needed they were handed over to the sculptor, who, with a pretty fancy and delicate touch, carved a head or some decorative or symbolic ornament.

In the early façades it did not often happen that projecting members needed support, as the vertical

character was generally obtained by setting back a few inches from the main wall face, but occasionally, as in No. 8 Rue de la Halle, a bolder version of the early type was resorted to, and then a system of corbels was necessary, and they were cleverly designed with moulded courses in character with the rest of the detail. On the other hand, with the accentuation of the horizontal line by the Renaissance builders, a constantly recurring practice was to bring forward the whole of the upper part above the ground floor windows on a series of semicircular arches which were carried on corbels and surmounted by a strongly marked string-course. In these stone corbels the masons found other opportunity for the exercise of their ingenuity, and a wonderful series they evolved. Some take the form of heads—human, grotesque, and animal; others are scrolls, and combinations of moulded and decorative shapes which are nearly always suited to their purpose, and are often gems of craftsmanship in themselves, such as those at No. 36 Rue des Carmes and No. 7 Rue du Fil, where the lions hold metal rings in their mouths.

But the list of features which the stone carver enriched on these façades in the streets of Bruges is not yet exhausted, for high up in the gables are little niches and, surmounting them, finials, which as often as not were his handiwork. These niches were undoubtedly intended to shelter busts and they

still do so at No. 47 Rue St. Jacques (p. 130), but they are mostly empty now, while a great



Examples of Chimney Stacks

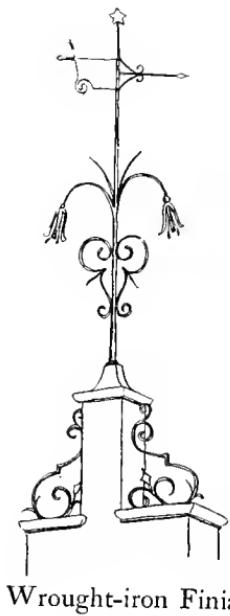
number are not so much niches as 'blind' windows. Tucked in the space between the apex of the gable or right and left of the central opening, they assume a variety of shapes

designed apparently more with regard to the space they occupy than to anything else: thus circular, elliptical, and octagonal ones abound, while heart-shaped, as at No. 37 Rue des Baudets, as well as pear-shaped, are found. Chimney stacks are seldom visible in relation to the façades, but the tops are often most picturesquely piled up by means of tiers of large ridge tiles or small brick arches arranged in alternate directions and taking a pyramidal outline.

The finials, from their exposed position, have naturally suffered severely, and good early examples probably do



Wrought-iron  
Bracket

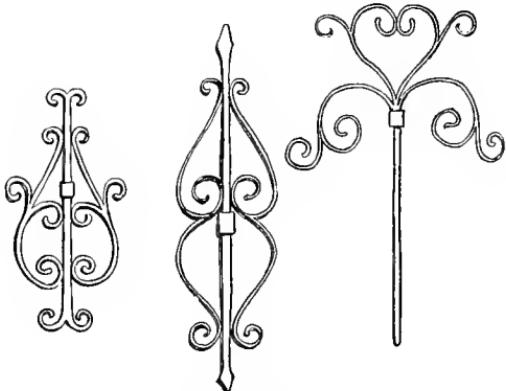


Wrought-iron Finial

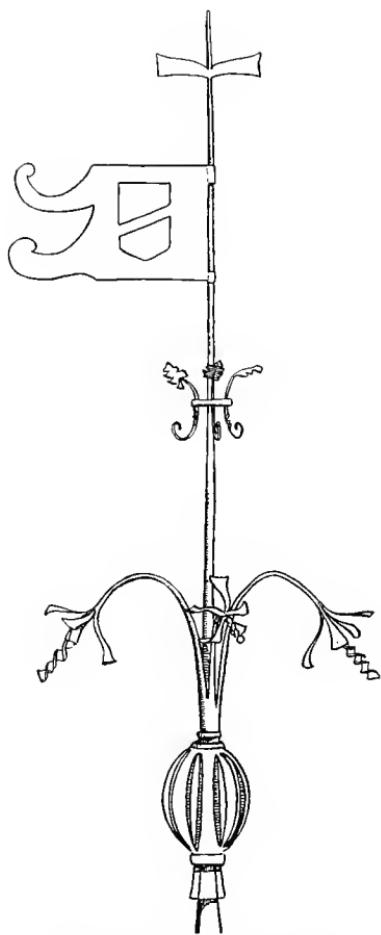
not exist *in situ*, but plenty remain surmounting façades built after the middle of the seventeenth century. As often as not the smith was requisitioned to make these finials of wrought iron, but his handiwork has not fared much better than the mason's, and the best examples are to be seen to-day in the museums. There are many fine ones in the Musée des Halles, but it is by no means certain that they all came from buildings in Bruges, and vanes from churches are indiscriminately mixed up with those from houses.

But the wrought-iron ties which are so conspicuous on brick buildings throughout the Low Countries,

figure prominently at Bruges, and whet-  
hershaped de cora-  
tively as scrolls and  
numerals or plainly



Wrought-iron Wall Ties



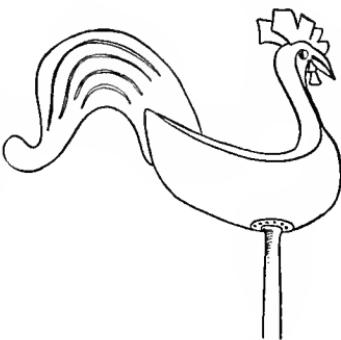
Wrought-iron Vane in the  
Museum

profiled, they express their constructive purpose and add no little interest. The iron grilles before the window openings also played an important part, but the more delicate smiths' work is found on the door and window fittings. These must have given the smiths fine opportunity, to judge from the exhibits in the museums : the profiles are daintily designed, and pierced work is common. These fittings may in some instances be more elaborate, but generally speaking, both in design and workmanship, they are near akin to those made by the English smiths during the Tudor period.

On the furnishing of the hearth much care was lavished : andirons, firebacks, and—in the kitchens—implements of various utility in the cooking

arrangements, even to beautiful gridirons, were in general use, although they are now seldom found in the houses. The cast-iron fireback was in vogue from early days, but a local departure for the lining of the back and sides of the large fireplace openings must have given a rich effect. In the Musée des Halles is a most interesting collection of small fire-bricks, modelled in low relief, which it is quite evident were used instead of and perhaps at an earlier date than cast-iron backs. Many of these are now detached and are complete designs in themselves, but others are portions of diapered patterns and doubtless they were set over the whole expanse of the wall within the fireplace opening, as may still be seen in the Château de Tilleghem, near Bruges. Other larger shaped pieces, mostly semicircular, formed the top of an upright firebrick slab when one was used instead of an iron one : there is a complete one of sixteenth century date which has been blacked, but the others are discoloured after long exposure to fire.

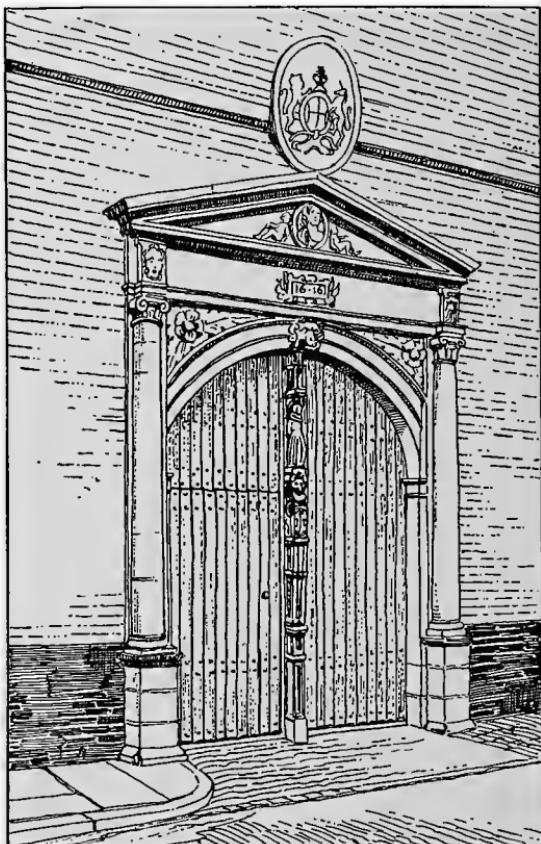
From old paintings and engravings it is evident that window glazing was, as a matter of course,



Wrought-iron Vane in the Museum

carried out in small pieces at first with lead cames, and later the blown glass with 'centres' was fixed

in wood sash bars. With so much restoration and widespread hankering after the dubious advantages of plate glass, not much original glazing is left, apart from the churches, and in this respect and in the disappearance of the original wooden doors and casements, lies the greatest loss which these old façades have sustained. It is



Doorway in the Rue Espagnole

indeed more of an event to come across an original door with its metal fittings than it is in many an English town where vandalism has been more rife.

Doors which open in two widths still remain here and there, and it is apparent from such an example as that in the Rue du Fil and from other fragments preserved in the museums, that much beautiful work was lavished upon them. A centre post was used, and according to the character of the building the wood carver enriched this with delicate figure and scroll work: that in the Rue



Muséum.



Rue Espagnole. Rue du fil.



Carved Centre Posts from Doorways

du Fil, which bears the date 1639, has been restored, but the upper part appears to be the original work, and a delightful specimen it undoubtedly is. Much detail of this character was lavished upon the churches, where the carved posts with their doors of moulded boards may be studied to greater advantage than in the houses. A few fine stone doorways are still met with such as that illustrated on page 136, in which a carved oak centre post occurs.

To what extent the interiors of the houses may have been panelled it is difficult to say, for they have, without exception, been restored beyond recognition. To judge from the massive ceiling beams and richly carved corbels still extant in the Hôtel Bladelin, the sumptuous oak furniture of all descriptions and the dainty metal-work to be seen in the museums, there is not much doubt that enriched panelling completed the scheme of many a fine room. The 'linen fold' panel must have been much in evidence in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, for Flanders was the home of this particular kind of enrichment. Some simple and many extremely elaborate varieties of it are to be seen in Bruges, wrought by the men who taught our own carvers in the time of Henry VII. and Henry VIII. Side by side with these 'linen folds' are other panels with profile heads wearing coiffures of the period carved in low relief, while in the furniture the heads often

project boldly and are carved in the round. The woodworker was certainly not behind the craftsman in other materials, and doors, stair balustrades and newels of a later date all point to his skill and versatility. Even his tools, it appears, were beautiful in themselves, for in the Musée des Halles are a set of planes ranging in date from 1733 to 1740, which, without loss of utility, are yet shaped with such delicacy that the workman must surely have been inspired to do good work by handling them.



Carved Oak Balustrade from Pulpit in the Church of St. Jacques

## CHAPTER VI

### THE CHURCHES OF BRUGES

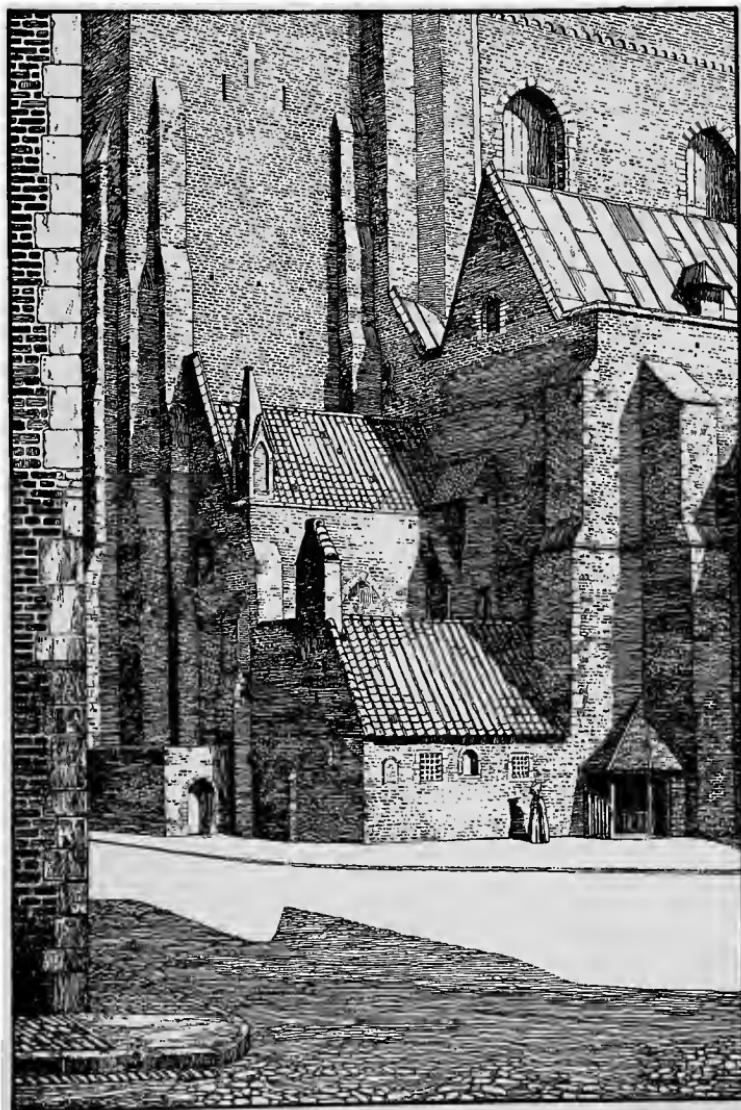
IT is symbolic of the hold that religion has on the life of Bruges that to the wayfarer in her streets or to one nearing the city from without, the spire of Notre Dame is as conspicuous as the Belfry. Amongst a community that treasures as its most honoured possession the relic of the Précieux Sang, it is not surprising to find vigorous religious life and churches numerous and well cared for. The torch of Christianity burns brightly, and just as the streets and *places* are athrong with priests and monks, so are the churches filled with worshippers. Devotion and loyalty have ever characterised the Fleming, and the absence from his nature of the emotionalism of the Italian and the light-hearted gaiety of the Frenchman tends to emphasise the simplicity and strength of his attitude towards religion. What he sets out to do he does wholeheartedly and with a certain seriousness. This is as apparent in his pleasures as when graver issues are at stake. The Fleming warms ‘both hands before the fire of life,’ and his determination is to miss no ray of heat. Whatever else he may be, he is not superficial, hence the durable quality of his religion.

The churches of Bruges, although they have



Exterior of the Church of Notre Dame

suffered as much from the onslaughts of fire, pillage, and the scourge of iconoclasm as have the public buildings, are in good preservation : they have been carefully—although by no means in every case successfully—restored. Of St. Donatian, however, the ancient Cathedral, not a stone remains ; as has already been told, it perished at the hands of the French Revolutionists in 1799, and since 1834 St. Sauveur has been the Cathedral. Founded in 646 by St. Eloy, this church is said to be the oldest brick building in Belgium, and it is a very beautiful example of a large church built in this material. Its choir and tower date from the twelfth century, the intermediate portions of the structure having been destroyed by fire and rebuilt in 1358. In the fifteenth century the building was remodelled by Jean van de Poele : the chapels of the ambulatory are also the work of that celebrated architect, and were built between the years 1482 and 1526. The massive exterior of brick hardly prepares one for the clean-cut stone architecture of the interior. The unusually lofty triforium and ribbed vaults, the fine chevet with radiating chapels, present an imposing appearance the effect of which is to some extent marred by the modern colour decoration that spreads over walls, piers and vaults. But in spite of this the wealth of sculpture, paintings and carving help in making this one of the most interesting interiors in Bruges.



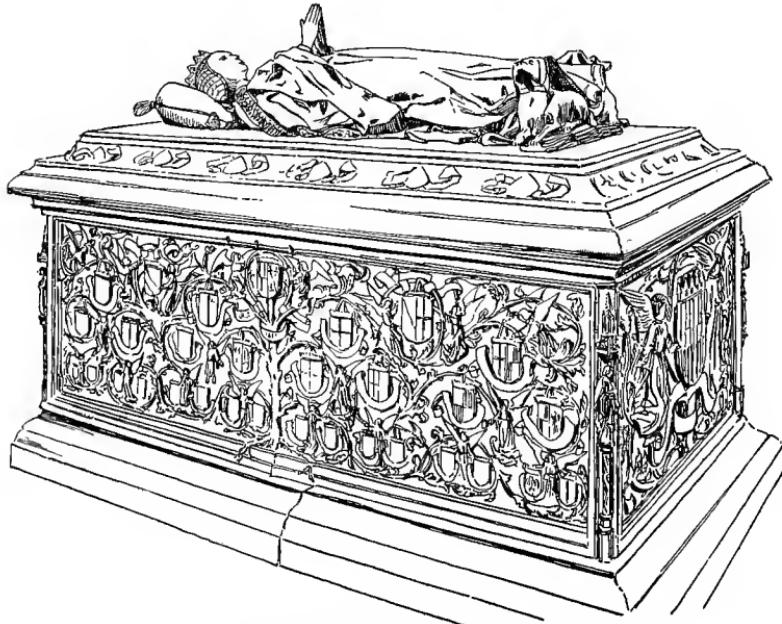
Outside the Church of St. Sauveur



Interior of the Church of Notre Dame

Of the exterior of the church of Notre Dame the most distinctive features are the brick tower, the great height of which is increased by a spire also of brick, and the ‘Paradise’—now the baptistery—which dates from the fifteenth century and is an architectural achievement in stone of which Bruges is justly proud. Originally dating back to the days of St. Boniface, the church of Notre Dame was rebuilt about the year 1120 by Charles the Good, Count of Flanders, and enlarged about the year 1170. The interior consists of a nave and four aisles, the nave and inner aisles date from 1180, the outer aisles having been built at the end of the fifteenth century. The red brick vault gives colour and contrasts well with the stone triforium : the arcade and triforium are continuous and do not break into the transepts, giving a fine continuity as seen from the nave. A florid oak pulpit accords ill with the rest of the interior, but is partially atoned for by the richly carved balustrade to the two flights of steps leading up to it. The rood-loft, which dates from 1722, is of marble and has handsome iron gates : on the rood stands the organ case. In the great sixteenth-century crucifix centre the forces that hold the worshippers. The visions of the priest, the artist and the poet, are expressed in the church of Notre Dame, which is rich also in the memory of men and women beloved of Bruges and prominent in her history.

It was in this church that the Knights of the Order of the Golden Fleece held their eleventh Chapter in 1468, on which occasion Edward IV. of England was present, and over the choir stalls may be seen the arms of the Knights and of the English Sovereign. In the 'Chapel of Tombs,' or Lanchals Chapel, is the tomb of Pierre Lanchals, Knight, Counsellor, Cupbearer, and Lord of Exchequer to Maximilian : he, it will be remembered, was beheaded in 1488. Here, too, are the monuments to Mary of



Tomb of Mary of Burgundy in the Church of  
Notre Dame

Burgundy—Countess of Flanders and wife of Maximilian—and her father, Charles the Bold. Until endangered by the zeal of the French Revolutionists, these tombs stood in the sanctuary over a vault where the ashes of father and daughter are now lying. They were moved from Notre Dame and kept in hiding in a house near by until 1806, when they were placed where they now stand in the Lanchals Chapel. A more beautiful tribute to a woman's memory could hardly be conceived than this to Mary, the young Countess, who died March 22, 1482, from a fall from her horse, at the age of twenty-five, leaving a sorry time to the Burghers of Flanders and a hazardous youth to her little son. This son it was, Philip the Fair, who ordered the making of the monument, and in 1502 it was finished. The tomb is of black marble, and on it rests the figure of the Princess wrought in gilded bronze: at her feet are two dogs. Viewing her face and the suggested grace of her figure, it is not difficult to picture something of the rejoicing with which the accession of this Princess was greeted by her Flemish subjects and their dismay at her untimely death. Her father's monument—a work of later date and of less interest to the artist—was executed in 1558 by Jacques Jonghelinck and Josse Aerts, by the order of Philip II.

In the north side of the ambulatory is the Gruuthuuse pew or 'Tribune'—the upper part of

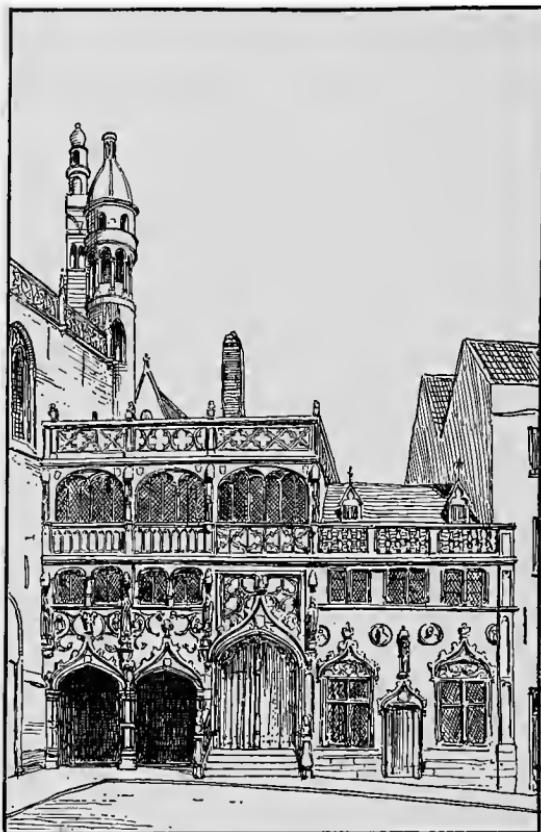


The Gruuthuse Pew in the Church of Notre Dame

which is of wood, the lower of stone—built about 1472 by Louis of Bruges, Lord of Gruuthuuse, and his wife Margaret. Their initials, L. M., the arms of Gruuthuuse and of Van den Aa, and the Gruuthuuse motto '*Plus est en vous*,' occur in the carving of this beautiful work. A stone passage connects the pew with the Hôtel Gruuthuuse. The beauty of the exterior of Notre Dame as seen from the east, owes something to its position on the bank of the little river Reie and the near neighbourhood of the Hôtel Gruuthuuse. The eastern façade of this noble house dates from 1388 : in 1470 a second gable was added, and between the years 1468 and 1470 the northern façade was built by Louis of Bruges. This man who, besides being distinguished for his culture and the quality of his character, carried on the fighting tradition of his ancestors, being one of the foremost warriors of his day, at the end of life found himself bereft of fortune and friends. He died in 1492, and rather more than a hundred years later, or to be exact, in 1626, the dwelling, so largely the result of his culture and munificence, was transferred into a *Mont de Piété*; from this the fortunes ebbed lower and lower until in 1873 a restoration was carried out and the building converted into a museum. Here were deposited the treasures of the Archæological Society as well as some wonderful lace collected by the baronne Liedts,

a gift to the town from her husband. An ideal museum, the spacious rooms and their beautiful contents have much to tell of the earlier life of Bruges.

The oldest masonry in the city must be sought in the church of St. Basil, parts of which are said to



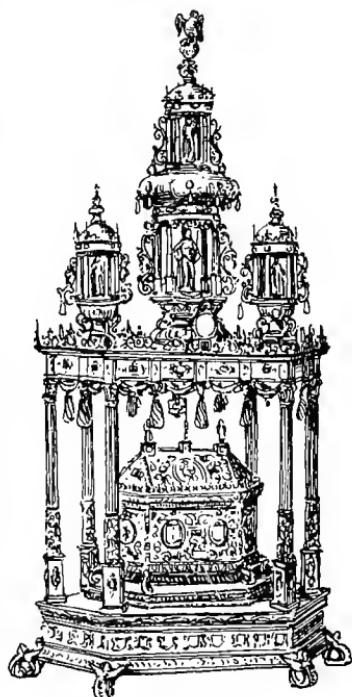
Porch of St. Basil

left to point to its twelfth-century origin, having

date back to the days of Baldwyn of the Iron Hand, the founder of the Bourg. This chapel stands on the south side of the Place du Bourg, adjoining the Hôtel de Ville, and was built by Dierck of Alsace in 1150 and was restored in 1896. It forms the crypt or lower storey of the Chapel of the Saint Sang. The latter has little

been greatly altered during the fifteenth and again in the sixteenth century. In contrast with the strength and dignity of St. Basil, the upper chapel presents a rather distracting and garish appearance, with its scheme of variously coloured decoration.

At right angles to the structure is the elaborate porch through which the staircase is reached leading to the Chapel of the Saint Sang. It was built about 1480, but has been altered several times: the tower dates from 1482. Within this charming little structure is the Musée du Saint Sang, and here is the *châsse* which contains the relic of the Précieux Sang, still preserved in the phial in which it was brought from Jerusalem. This *châsse*, which dates from 1617, and was executed by the Bruegan goldsmith, Jean Crabbe, replaces the reliquary of Gothic workmanship destroyed by the Gueux in 1578: in it the relic is conveyed in the procession of the May Festival.



The Châsse

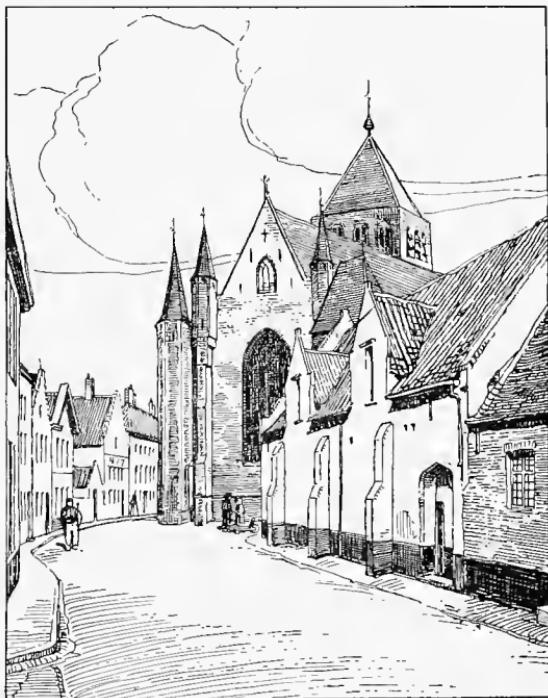
Interesting alike for the fine works of art it contains, and for its connection in the past with men of import to the history of the city, is the church of St. Jacques. It was founded in the twelfth century

and in 1240 raised to the dignity of a parish church. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries it was enlarged and much altered: and at the end of the nineteenth century it underwent restoration at the hands of the architect De Wulf. The parts dating



St. Walburg from the Rue de la Paille

from the thirteenth century, namely, the lower part of the tower, the transept, and the north chapel, are so altered as to retain little of their original character. The south aisle was built in 1476, being the gift of parishioners, amongst whom figure the names of Charles the Bold, Jean de Gros, chevalier de la Toison d'Or (a knight of the Golden Fleece), and Thomas Portinari, a wealthy Florentine merchant living near by in the Hôtel Bladelin. The spacing of the piers in this church is especially happy, and gives to the interior a suggestion of vastness and mystery, accentuated by the incense-laden atmosphere. Just outside the church is the very beautiful Calvary of which a sketch is given on page 159.



St. Jacques from the Rue du Marécage

Not far from the Quai Ste. Anne, within a network of small streets, stands the church of St. Walburg, the building of which was begun in 1619 from the design of the Jesuit Father, Pierre Huyssens, a native of Bruges, who died in 1637. A glimpse of its tower is caught in the Rue de la Paille.

The church of St. Anne stands in a poor part of the city and its plain brick exterior little leads one to expect the rich character of the interior. A small church without aisles, the almost florid decorative treatment employed gives good result. The roof is vaulted and all round the inside of the church is richly carved woodwork. There is also good carving on the oak altar-rail. The jubé is of black and white marble with brass pillars, and surmounting it is the organ.

Seen through vistas afforded by many a narrow street, the church of St. Gilles is attractive in its appearance. Founded in 1240, it became a parish church in 1311. It is of various dates, the oldest portion being the nave, which was built in 1240, but which, owing to alterations and restorations, has lost most of its original characteristics. The tower was added in the fourteenth century, but its steep octagonal roof is of later date. The side aisles were extended in 1450, and in 1465 the choir and side chapels were built, the chantry and north chapel being added in 1508. The structure has been so



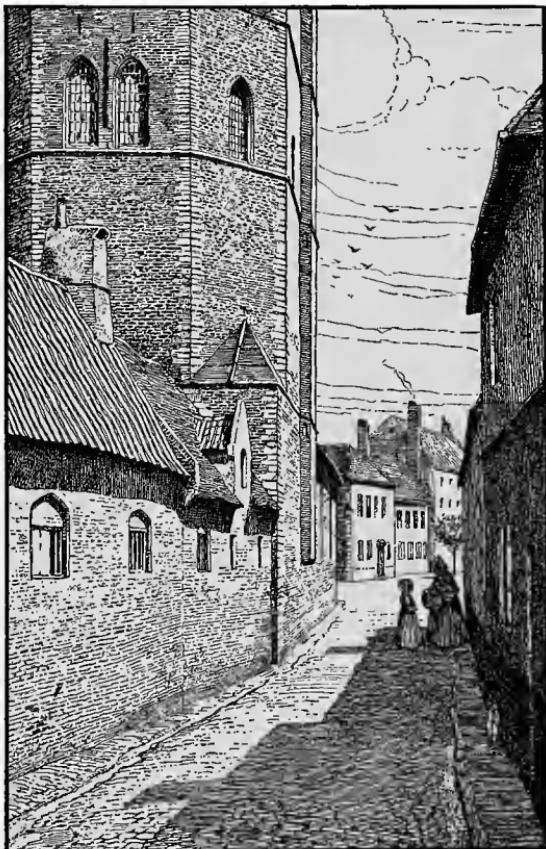
The Tower of St. Gilles

drastically restored as to leave little interest in the interior.

Perhaps the most remarkable of all church interiors in Bruges is that of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre or Eglise Jérusalem. It is unusual in character, with a short nave on a lower level than the choir, which is reached by two lofty flights of steps, one on each side of the stone screen. The nave has a wood barrel roof; the choir rises into the tower with a groined roof restored in recent years. This interior, which is entirely of brick of a colour neither red nor yellow but most nearly resembling apricot, contains much that is interesting. Besides the tombs of the founders there are some good mural tablets, and the small traceried windows on the south side of the choir are worthy of notice. The round windows also are good and contain glass with shields in the middle dating from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, but restored in 1890. On the exterior are sculptured the armorial bearings of the Adornes family, a wheel with radiant clouds. This church was founded in 1427 by the brothers Peter and James Adorne, but it was not finished until 1465. It was at one time the private chapel to the Hôtel d'Adorne which adjoins it—in the fifteenth century the princely dwelling of a distinguished family.

That the churches of Bruges are not more striking, not more magnificent, is something of a

surprise. It is evident that the genius of the Bruegans has not found full expression in their churches albeit religion has always been a main factor in their lives: here perhaps lies the solution to the puzzle. The Fleming did not confine his faith within brick walls: the objects of his worship were a familiar part of his everyday life. We have seen how throughout the city the enshrined Saint met the eye: not less true is it that in the fêtes of Flanders religious fervour and riotous play took equally active parts.



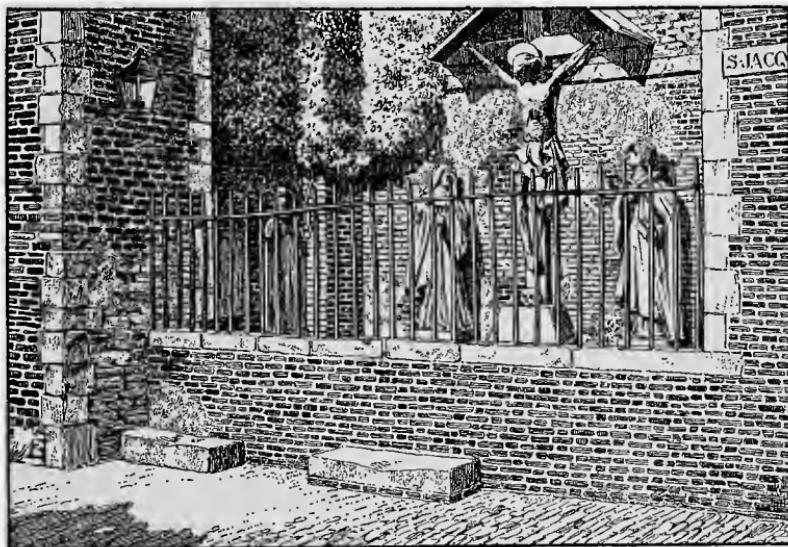
Church of the Holy Sepulchre

It is not as a city of churches that Bruges signals herself in the memory. She defies division : it is not on account of her churches, nor of her civic buildings, nor of her palaces that one seeks Bruges. It is herself that attracts. And the charm lives. A first sight of the city—whether it be arriving in the Grand' Place on a summer's night, or in the winter glow of a November afternoon—does not fade from the memory.

To see Bruges, be alone there. Sound advice regarding many a place, but there are few where so little of loneliness will be felt as in this old city, so many corners of which hold a greeting. It is not possible to say why one loves Bruges. If curbed by neither time nor space, only a poet could accomplish such a task ; but one thing is certain, that however frequent and however long your visits to Bruges, you will yet touch but the fringe of the beauty and the quality that are hers. Through her streets romance walks hand in hand with history, and into the mind steal sights and sounds that the old city gives now and again to the tireless lover.

Each will see Bruges in his own way. One, it may be, will be fastened by a memory of some particular aspect ; and for this we may be grateful, for delightful are the impressions made on many who have lingered there, as we know from drawings and paintings. Another may fix a thought in a poem,

and precious is such a tribute to the power of the old grey city. Others, again, whose facility of expression is helped neither by pen nor pencil, have yet had their glimpses, and their personalities have gained in quality. The medium of expression is of little import : all with eyes and hearts attuned come back the richer for having seen Bruges.



Calvary outside the Church of St. Jacques

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Canal de Damme

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SKETCH PLAN  
OF  
*BRUGES*



Blankenbergh

Ostende

